

## Chapter One: Unlikely Meeting

Harry Potter's life sucked. He wondered what he did to deserve the cards that life had dealt him. He suspected he was an extremely evil person in a past life. At least that was the only explanation that made sense to Harry. He had gone over what happened during his first five years at Hogwarts and quite frankly, he was lucky to be alive. By all rights, he should have been dead or at least in a vegetative state. There was no need to go over the past five years, in his mind, Harry had done that far too often for any mentally healthy person.

His latest turn of the Wheel of Misfortune had left his godfather blasted through the mysterious veil of creepiness, located in the Department of Mysteries. Harry saw it in his nightmares every night and had brooded about it. He had only exchanged a few conversations with Sirius and a handful of letters, but still losing anyone who did not treat him like something they scraped off the bottom of their shoe was something that Harry detested. He had no idea what the veil was nor did he care that much. Sirius had perished, thanks to his own mentally unhinged cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange. Harry's retaliation through the Cruciatus Curse made him felt better than he should have, even if it was just a few seconds. Then Lord Voldemort showed up, dueled with Dumbledore, ill fated possession attempt that left Voldemort in a bad way, and then the Minister finally pulled his head out of his arse, realizing that Voldemort had returned.

Then Dumbledore decided to drop a bombshell on him. Something that Dumbledore should have told him five years ago, but failed to do so. Harry had to kill Voldemort or be killed by him. Now, Harry Potter was not a betting man, but if he had to place a wager, he would put it firmly on Lord Voldemort. The simple fact that he was the most powerful Dark Lord in a century and had over fifty more years of magical experience on Harry had something to do about it. Right now, he looked through his school textbooks. Call it a hunch, but Harry had come to a realization that transfiguring a match into a needle was not the key to defeating Voldemort. In fact, about ninety percent of the Hogwarts education was useless tripe when one really looked at it. Sure, there was some useful spells here and there, but Harry learned more from his own limited research when his hand was forced than his own classroom. His mind flashed back to how Dumbledore and

Voldemort dueled in the Ministry, now that was what magic should be. He doubted either of them got that from a Hogwarts education.

And Dumbledore was babbling about some kind of power of love. Harry wondered if Dumbledore had inhaled one too many lemon drops in his day.

Currently at Number Four Privet Drive, his favorite prison, Harry wondered when he was going to sprung loose. His friends had only wrote him vague letters, again, saying that they could not divulge too much information. Apparently, Albus Dumbledore did not approve of Harry knowing anything. Of course, that made a lot of sense, why let the only person who might be able to vaporize Voldemort and end his threat once and for all know anything? That was completely absurd. He had a truce with the Dursleys and that was to interact as little as possible. That seemed to suit both parties fine, the Dursleys hated Harry and the feeling was more than mutual.

Right now he threw his third year charms book against the wall, in slight frustration but winced immediately, if the Dursleys heard him, he was going to have to deal with them a few hours earlier than he wanted to. Suddenly, the book stopped and dropped to the floor, as light as a feather. Harry looked at it.

“Interesting,” muttered Harry to himself. He had not even had his wand in his hand and yet the book was slowed down. Harry looked at the book, almost in an attempt to will it to him but no dice there. He would have to explore this later, but it was something that appeared to manifest in times of great need.

A loud crash echoed from downstairs and Harry bolted to his feet. He heard the pained grunt of Vernon Dursley and a shriek of Petunia Dursley. Both of them appeared to be silenced immediately and Harry walked over, tip toeing across his room, wand in hand. Dumbledore said he would be safe here, but Harry was not feeling too fond of Dumbledore’s judgment right now.

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A figure dressed in black, face covered with a hood walked around, with a nod, looking around. The three Muggles had been knocked unconscious and the figure moved forward, pulling out a wand, looking around the house.

“Pitiful, these Muggles don’t even have a security system, yet they have four cars,” said the intruder, a female, as she looked around, blue eyes visible as she looked around for anything of value. “Tacky looking things too and those two locks, a hair pin and that was all that I needed to circumvent their pathetically simple security system.”

The intruder moved around, careful not to use any magic unless she was put in danger. The Ministry was watching Muggle neighborhoods like hawks, magical sensors installed to pick up any activity. She stepped around, looking from the shelves, seeing a bunch of cheap little ornaments. The type where the lightest nudge would break them into pieces, as she crept up the stairs, hoping to find something of value, as well kept up as this house looked on the outside, these people had to have something that was worth selling.

She walked around, four bedrooms on this floor and she spotted a table. With a smile, the figure walked forward. The vase looked like a rare collectable, dating back centuries, maybe had magical properties for all she knew, and these Muggles were using it as a decoration. She would have to get it appraised at Gringotts and find out.

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Harry crept from his room, he saw a figure lurking down the hall and appeared to stop, looking at Petunia’s cheap imitation vase with interest. Petunia had got that vase at a bargain, the only thing in this house that the Dursleys had spent less on than Harry.

“Imagine the Galleons I’d fetch for this,” said the intruder and Harry paused, it was a witch, he could see the wand and he had his remaining on guard. It appeared to be a thief, not a Death Eater, which was a good sign. Of course, the fact that they broke into a house that was supposed to be protected according to Dumbledore was something that disturbed Harry.

“Actually for that thing, if you were given a Knut, the goblins would ask for change,” responded Harry calmly and the intruder spun around, dropping the vase which shattered into dust on impact. She thought she had knocked everyone out.

“You don’t know who you’re dealing with, Muggle,” said the intruder.

“Actually a wizard,” responded Harry as he raised the wand and the intruder froze. She did not really want to get into a duel right here. The Ministry would be here by the time she could blink and then she would never get the gold she needed to save them.

“Look, I never stole anything and...” said the intruder before she trailed off. Even in the darkness, she would recognize that scar anyway. Any witch her age would know it even if they were not a bubbling fan girl. “Potter?”

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out,” said Harry as he looked at the intruder. Now that he thought about it, her voice did sound familiar, although if he was damned if he could place it. “Do I know you?”

“Yes, but you won’t find out,” said the intruder, as she made a movement towards the stairs, quickly and swiftly.

“Get back here!” shouted Harry, preparing to draw his wand but the intruder tripped over her own feet before she could make the stairs. She crashed to the ground and Harry looked at her with a surprise, as she was cursing, in an attempt to get to her feet, but she was unable to move.

“That was a rotten trick, using a trip jinx!” shouted the intruder and Harry looked surprised, shrugging. “The Ministry will be here any minute anyway...”

“Ah so that’s the spell I used,” said Harry as he offered her a hand to get up to her feet, but she refused and attempted to struggle back to her feet, wincing. She had twisted her ankle and was unable to get out of her and lost her wand. She never felt so humiliated in her life and Harry grabbed her and pulled her up to her feet. Immediately,

she struggled, wondering where the Ministry Aurors were, bursting through the doors and she attempted to kick Harry in the shins to get away.

“Let go of me, I need to get out of here!” shouted the intruder, she was making a scene, kicking, screaming, in an attempt to attract any attention but she was steered into a room, with Hogwarts books scattered all over the floor and a snowy owl in a cage, hooting an indignant manner. “Why isn’t the Ministry here? I saw you; you pulled out your wand and attacked me.”

“For your information, I never used my wand,” said Harry coolly and the intruder gasped. She could hardly believe it.

“Wandless magic, of course you would have to know wandless magic,” said the intruder, as she sat down. Her wand was left in the hallway and Harry sat down right across her. A few seconds later, she found her hands and feet bound by thick cords.

“I was getting tired of you kicking me,” said Harry as he reached forward. The girl tilted her head backwards, she wondered where Harry Potter of all people had learned how to use wandless magic. Unless it was accidental, it was considered a dark art by the ever wonderful and closed minded Ministry of Magic. She struggled, as Harry prepared to remove her hood.

“LET GO OF ME!” shouted the intruder but Harry gave a tug and removed the hood, revealing her face, her scowling face, as long black hair, looking slightly ragged from being shoved underneath a hood dropped down. Her blue eyes were looking at Harry with absolute contempt and disgust.

“Daphne Greengrass, I presume,” responded Harry and Daphne just grumbled, but gave a stiff nod, as Harry studied her. “Why are you here?”

“Drop dead, Potter,” said Daphne through gritted teeth.

"A Slytherin, lurking in a house of a Muggle neighborhood like a common thief and getting caught and unmasked, that doesn't seem too cunning," said Harry but Daphne's scowl just deepened.

"Go to hell, Potter," said Daphne.

"You know Dumbledore said me living here was supposed to keep out anyone who intended to do harm to me," responded Harry with a frown.

"For your information, I wasn't here intending to do you harm, although if you don't untie me that plan will change, I was here to...." Stated Daphne before she trailed off and gave her head a shake. She wanted none of Potter's pity for the situation she was in. "I didn't want to kill you, in fact, I didn't even know you lived here, until you showed your little demented scar face here."

"So you weren't sent here by Voldemort to kidnap or kill me?" asked Harry and Daphne nodded in clarification.

"No, I wasn't, although I'm sure your simple little Gryffindor mind came to that conclusion just because I'm a Slytherin," said Daphne, as she struggled against her bindings.

"You know, insulting me isn't going to help your chances of being untied," said Harry calmly.

"Maybe if I threaten to hex your bits off, it might help my chances," said Daphne through gritted teeth and Harry just responded, sitting next to her with a smile on his face. It was creeping her out slightly, but she vowed not to show Potter any discomfort on her face.

"You can tell me where you were lurking around in a Muggle house, looking for stuff to steal or be very uncomfortable for the rest of the evening," said Harry as he stared at her, tapping his feet. "I have nothing else better to do tonight. I'll get the answer of you, one way or another, Greengrass."

"Right, Potter, if you had the balls to do anything that bold, you would have done it a long time ago," said Daphne, calling his bluff.

“Dumbledore’s little golden boy won’t dare hurt someone else. I’ll stay tied up here for a while, before you crawl to Dumbledore, asking him to guide you by the hand to the most simple solution possible. And the Daily Prophet has been calling you our best hope against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. What a complete and utter joke? You can’t even handle Malfoy and they expect you to help lead the light side to victory. It would be kind of amusing, if it wasn’t so pathetic.”

Harry just refused to respond, looking back at the Slytherin. She was right, talking about certain conclusions that he was just beginning to come to. Without Dumbledore, he would really be nowhere; he was relying on the Hogwarts Headmaster a bit too much and the fact that Dumbledore just happened to be around to pull him out of the fire a lot seemed to be too much of a coincidence. Time seemed to pass, as Harry tried to figure out what he needed to do, truthfully if he contacted the Headmaster, he would take the Slytherin girl away but Harry would never learn anything about why she was here.

“Those Muggles I knocked out, they’re only be out for a few hours,” added Daphne as an afterthought. “Less time than it will take for you to think of a plan, given how fast your mind tends to work. The Mudblood’s not here to do your thinking for you either...”

“You have no right to talk about my friends like that,” responded Harry in an irritated voice but Daphne just responded with a slight smirk.

“With friends like Weasley and Granger, I would rather have a hundred enemies as powerful as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” stated Daphne as she rolled her eyes. “When the dust settles, who do you think they would be loyal to, you or Dumbledore? They could sell you out to Dumbledore and you wouldn’t even know it and maybe neither would they for all I know.”

“My friends would never betray me,” said Harry calmly and Daphne just responded with laughter. The girl looked like she could barely breathe, she was laughing so hard.

“Potter, you do amuse me, I’ll give you that, the sad part is, I can’t believe that someone who rolled the dice with fate and lived so much is so hopelessly naïve,” said Daphne. I guess you must have taken

one Cruciatus Curse too many, it's scrambled the logical portions of your brain."

"Why should I believe you?" demanded Harry.

"You really shouldn't, I could be misleading you, to gain your trust," responded Daphne, with a slight nod. "Perhaps you aren't as naïve as I thought, perhaps there is something resembling a brain in there. I could be fooling you for my own gains, then again, I could be giving you a warning to watch what you say around certain people."

Harry paused, he wondering what he could say. There was nothing he really could say to that. In fact, he felt a throbbing headache come on.

"What's the matter? Did I confuse your poor little Gryffindor brain?" asked Daphne.

"ENOUGH!" shouted Harry angrily, as he stared down at Daphne, who winced for a brief second. She had never really seen Potter angry at all but now she was face to face with a wizard who had been pushed to the breaking point. "I want answers and you need to give them to me right now."

"Untie me first," responded Daphne but Harry just stood there, refusing to budge.

"Yes, like I'd trust you to keep your word," responded Harry harshly, as he held his wand a few inches away from her throat.

"I wouldn't do that, the Ministry will be here in seconds if you use your wand," said Daphne.

"They would have been here earlier, because of the magic I used," argued Harry.

"No, that was wandless magic," said Daphne, as she shook her head. "The Ministry can't detect that, that's why it's drilled in our heads at Hogwarts that all magic requires wand movements. They can track



magical usage through her wands, but not wandless magic, mainly because it's hard to determine whether it's accidental or intentional."

"The house elf that got me the underage warning from the Ministry didn't use a wand," argued Harry but Daphne had no answer to that. "Now, what in the hell were you doing breaking into a Muggle home?"

"Homes actually, this is my third stop tonight," said Daphne. "As for the reason why, like I'm going to tell you, it's personal, Potter. You might be an open book, but I do like to have my secrets."

"I could turn you into Dumbledore or maybe even Snape, they would get the answer," said Harry, hoping to threaten the girl in telling.

"I have no doubt they will Potter, but they'd never tell you," said Daphne who sighed. "This is getting tiring; all we're going to do is go around in circles and not get anywhere. You keep asking me and I won't tell you. Just untie me and let me leave."

"No, Greengrass," responded Harry stubbornly, as he walked over, looking at his wand, before he held it up. Still, the girl was right and he knew it. He was out of options.

"I'm rather surprised about your sleeping arrangements, Potter, this is a room that even a Weasley would feel uncomfortable in," commented Daphne, as she surveyed the room. "No wonder you enjoy spending so much time at that hovel that the Weasleys call home, this is a paradise compared to that."

Harry tried to hide his anger at the slight against the Weasleys.

"Really pathetic," summarized Daphne as she looked at the room. "I might not like you, but you really do deserve better than this, Potter."

"Why, because I'm the Boy-Who-Lived?" asked Harry, feeling his temper rising.

"No, because you're the head of a pureblood family," said Daphne as she shook her head. "The only thing that I can think of that could be worse is if you had to sleep in a broom cupboard."

“Been there, done that,” commented Harry lightly and Daphne just responded with a frown, eyes narrowed.

“I was only being facetious, but seriously, you really were forced to sleep in a broom cupboard?” said Daphne and Harry looked angered with himself, he had inadvertently given her a piece of information. Still, by his lack of answer, Daphne could figure out the answer. “And you’re acting like this is normal, nothing to be bothered about. Even by the barbaric standards Muggles live by, I would think that qualifies as child abuse.”

“It really wasn’t a problem, it was years ago,” said Harry dismissively.

“It’s a problem, do you realize how badly it reflects on the rest of us to have the head of a pureblood family abused?” asked Daphne and Harry looked at her, but she sighed. “You might have had potential, but Dumbledore had to ruin it. If I’m reading you right, he sent you here for a reason. I find it hard to believe that a loving and caring family like the Weasleys wouldn’t notice something was wrong and fight to get you removed. Unless, Dumbledore convinced them not to do anything. The same thing with the Mudblood...”

“DON’T CALL HER THAT!” shouted Harry angrily.

“Granger’s personifies the worst of the stereotypes of all Muggleborns, so she deserves to be called worse,” responded Daphne calmly. “Yes, I know full well that your mother was a Muggleborn but she was the exception, rather than the rule. She kept her mouth shut and learned everything she could, rather than assuming she knew everything and flaunting her knowledge. Unlike a certain other Muggleborn I know. There is a reason that there are prejudices, Potter, but yes, some people do take them a bit out of hand.”

Daphne turned and coughed slightly. The cough sounded suspiciously like “Malfoy.”

“The point I’m trying to make Potter, is that I truthfully think you can be more than you could be now, if you allow yourself to be,” said Daphne as she paused for a few seconds. As much as she hated to

admit it, perhaps Potter could be useful to help her with the situation she got herself into. "And I can help you."

"Why in the world should I trust you?" challenged Harry.

"You need my help Potter," said Daphne confidentially. "I know things about how magical society works that Dumbledore never allowed you to learn. Things that might be able to help you see the next day, but I don't claim to know everything. Still, you're woefully behind and without Dumbledore, you don't have a hope in defeating You-Know-Who. It's almost like he wants to sacrifice you, perhaps he thinks that it will weaken You-Know-Who so he can be killed. Damned if I can figure the old man out."

Harry just looked back, considering his options. The truth was, he needed all the advantages he could if he hoped to even hold his own against Voldemort and after the Department of Mysteries battle, he was desperate. There was one question that was bugging him.

"What's in it for you?" asked Harry.

"I'll let you know when we get to a private and secure place, Potter, but it does tie into the reason why I was robbing Muggle homes like a common thief," said Daphne. "Just untie me and I'll help you escape this filthy place. I swear on my honor as a witch that I won't hex, curse, jinx, or otherwise harm you, even though you do deserve it."

Harry paused for a second, considering his options, holding his wand, not taking his eyes off of Daphne for one second, as Harry untied her the Muggle way. Daphne got to her feet, walking towards the door, as she reached the hallway and picked up her wand. Harry braced himself but much to his surprise, the Slytherin did not break her word.

"Take my hand, Potter, and I'll get us out of here," said Daphne and Harry paused, as if considering something.

"What about my stuff?" asked Harry.

“Too much of a risk that it could be traceable,” responded Daphne firmly. “You have your wand, that’s about all you need. We can come back for it later once certain things have been taken care of.”

Harry looked like he was going to protest but Daphne grabbed him firmly by the arm.

“Brace yourself, Potter, I’m going to Apparate us out of here,” responded Daphne and before Harry could even begin to protest this, he felt a tug and they both disappeared with a pop, echoing throughout the house.

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In Number Twelve Grimmauld Place, Hermione Granger sat on a chair in her room, a letter from Harry in her hand, looking at it with numb shock. She heard footsteps and she looked over her shoulder, as Ron Weasley approached her.

“What is it, Hermione?” asked Ron. He had never seen Hermione look so shocked and slightly hurt in her life.

“I sent Harry a letter about a week ago and he sent me this reply back,” said Hermione and Ron took it, before reading it.

Hermione:

I don’t think it’s wise to tell you how I’m feeling after the death of Sirius, considering it might be intercepted. After all, we learned last summer that it’s unwise to put any information that people might want to know in letters.

Harry.

“Well, it could be worse,” responded Ron lightly. “It’s a good thing that Harry doesn’t know how to create a Howler. I just have this funny feeling he’ll be worse than Mum.”

“I still can’t believe he would do this, I was only trying to help,” said Hermione in a helpless voice. “Besides, what we did last summer,

Dumbledore made us swear not to include anything in our letters. This is different..."

"Harry really doesn't like having stuff kept from him and do you blame him?" asked Ron. "I would be mad if I was kept out of the loop like that. After all the times he had to go up against You-Know-Who, he does deserve to know..."

"Dumbledore has his reason Ron and maybe if Harry had put a little more effort in to his Occlumency Lessons with Professor Snape, Dumbledore would have given him a bit more information," responded Hermione and Ron opened his mouth but Hermione cut him off. "Ron, Dumbledore trusts Professor Snape..."

"If we believe that Snape's fooling You-Know-Who, he could fool Dumbledore," argued Ron stubbornly. Ever since the incident with the brains at the Department of Mysteries, he had been getting occasional bursts of inspiration. They were making his head hurt, as his brain was unaccustomed to having such complex thoughts.

"Dumbledore trusts Snape," responded Hermione stubbornly. "I just can't believe Harry, it can't be good for him to brood like this."

"Yeah, well imagine what he's going to be like when he finds out that You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters tried to attack the Burrow and we didn't bother to write to him about him," said Ron.

"Your mother told you not to, she didn't want Harry to be burdened about it, make him think it was his fault," said Hermione firmly.

"Yeah, but Dumbledore was the one that convinced her to tell us to keep the information from Harry, not that it took much convincing, Mum treats all of us like children," said Ron with a tone of bitterness in his voice.

"It doesn't matter, Harry will be here in a few days, according to Dumbledore," said Hermione. "We can talk to him then."

"Joy," responded Ron dryly, who did not look forward to dealing with Hurricane Harry, once he found out that even more things were being

kept for them. It was looking to be even worse than his meltdown last year after the incident with the Dementors.

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Albus Dumbledore returned to his office at Hogwarts, finally managing to slip away from his meeting with Cornelius Fudge. Fudge was at the absolute height of his desperation, knowing his days at the Ministry were numbered. Dumbledore was summoned to the Ministry daily, as Fudge was trying to do everything to salvage his damaged career. His latest scheme was trying to get Harry to endorse Fudge. After what Fudge tried to do last year, Dumbledore applauded the man for his guts but there were certain boundaries that the Headmaster did not wish to push. He could persuade Harry of a lot, but this was one thing that Dumbledore would not even try to convince Harry of.

Speaking of Harry, the monitoring instrument glowed a bright blue, nearly blinding Dumbledore with the light. Dumbledore walked over, with a frown, there was magic done on Number Four Privet Drive but the instrument should not be glowing that particular shade of blue unless Harry had left and the blood protections were just in the beginning stage of collapsing. Harry would have to be there three more days to completely recharge them. Not to mention the other wards that Dumbledore had put in place for the Greater Good.

Without a moment to spare, knowing that he had forty eight hours before everything that he worked hard for collapsed, Dumbledore grabbed a handful of Floo Powder and tossed it into the fireplace.

“Alastor, report to my office immediately, I have a situation that needs your attention immediately!” called Dumbledore, as he awaited the grizzled Auror. Time was of the essence.

And I'm back, for another story that I've been sitting on for quite some time. I actually had this idea before I started Inverted, but nothing was clicking until right now. So I went and wrote that story and came back to this plotline when I was ready. And that time has come. I hope this story will turn out alright, but only time will tell. It's only the first

chapter and the motivations of certain characters only have been slightly hinted at, with room for evolution.

## Chapter Two: Just When You Think You Have the Answers...

Alastor Moody arrived just outside of Number Four Privet Drive, moving as fast as his wooden leg would allow him towards the front door. Dumbledore had given him just enough information, Potter was missing and Moody needed to figure out what happened. How far the boy had gone, who might have took him, and how they might have breached the security? All questions that needed to be asked and Moody held his wand, throwing stinging hexes into the bushes. A yelp and a squirrel staggered out of the bushes, but Moody paid it no mind. It could have just as easily been a Death Eater. He walked up to the front door, his magical eye whizzing within its socket as he moved forward. The door was already unlocked. In fact, it had been picked by Muggle methods, with no magic to be detected.

“Just what I need, an intelligent kidnapper,” grumbled Moody in a low voice, but he reminded himself that there was no proof either way that Potter had been kidnapped or left on his own accord, as he pushed the door opened. Had they used an Alohomora spell, there was a chance that the magic could be traced. Then again, had the person used their wand, the entire Auror Department would have been at the front steps before any intruders could even blink. Moody walked forward, as he saw a grossly obese figure stirring on the carpet. It took him a few seconds to realize it was Potter’s Uncle and he appeared to have been knocked unconscious by some blunt force trauma to the back of the head. “Up to your feet, Dursley, I’m not in the mood to play games.”

“What are you doing?” grumbled Vernon, as his head appeared in a dazed and everything came back to him in a flood and he turned towards Moody, face getting purple from the anger. “You’re one of the freaks, the one that tried to tell us how to deal with the boy. Well we toed your little line, didn’t like it, but we had an agreement. We did nothing wrong...”

“No you didn’t, at least nothing I know, but by the way you’re protesting, you’re hiding something,” said Moody, as he watched Petunia and Dudley slowly come to their senses as well. “Just decided to take a nap on the floor in your sitting room, did you?”



"No, some psychopath attacked us, after breaking in the front door," said Vernon in an angered voice. "Knocked us unconscious, most likely stole most of our valuables. Should be hung the lot of them..."

"Doubt the thief stole anything, judging by some of this rubbish you have in this room," said Moody with a growl, as his eye moved around, surveying the extremely tacky ornaments. "What time was it about?"

"After dinnertime, around seven, maybe eight o'clock," grumbled Vernon. "I need to make a phone call, report this to the police, see if the insurance will pay anything for this..."

"Where was Potter?" demanded Moody.

"Upstairs in his room, as I told you, we came to an agreement, the boy stayed out of our way and we stayed out of his, it was an arrangement that we found we could both agree on," responded Vernon as he looked at Moody. "Finally here to take him back to where he belongs, with the rest of the freaks..."

"No Dursley, Potter has left, he's no longer here," said Moody with a growl, as a great deal of time had already passed, Dumbledore had been kept at the Ministry for too long, there was no telling where Potter had run off too. Moody walked up the stairs, ignoring the protests and threats of Vernon Dursley. Somehow, after dealing with dark wizards and witches for so many years, a fat Muggle did not intimidate Moody. Moody reached the room where Potter was staying in and looked around, hoping to find some clue, but found that the boy's things were all there and his bed had been unmade. Moody removed a crystal from his pocket, tapped it three times and the three dimensional image of Dumbledore appeared. Dumbledore looked extremely worried.

"Did you find anything, Alastor?" asked Dumbledore.

"The Dursleys said that someone broke into their house last night," said Moody and Dumbledore nodded. "I'm up here in Potter's room; none of his things are missing except for his wand."

“Not even his Invisibility Cloak or his Firebolt or the Marauder’s Map?” asked Dumbledore with a frown and Moody searched around, verifying that all three of the items were there but much to his surprise they were. As far as he knew, they were all important to Potter.

“No, Dumbledore, all here,” said Moody, as he held up all of the items for Dumbledore to see and Dumbledore responded with a grim nod.

“A kidnapping then, most likely Muggle thieves found nothing of value within the house and decided to kidnap Harry, holding him for ransom,” theorized Dumbledore and Moody paused, considering that theory. “I need to remain on guard, I do have subtle tracking spells placed on Harry’s wand, in case of an emergency, but they’ll only be of use if he uses his wand.”

“You really think it is a kidnapping, Dumbledore?” asked Moody.

“All signs point to it, Alastor, I doubt Harry would run away, especially without taking his prize possessions with him,” said Dumbledore, as if this was the most logical thing in the world but Moody just looked skeptical for some reason.

“That’s exactly what the boy might think you believe Dumbledore and decided to leave them here to trick you,” said Moody and Dumbledore looked a bit amused at this theory that Moody presented. “You have to think of all the possibilities Dumbledore, even those that seem to be unrealistic. In fact, an unrealistic plan can be the best, because no one sees it coming.”

“What reason would Harry have to fake his own kidnapping?” asked Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye.

“Don’t know, Dumbledore, but I’m sure you could come up with some theories given the proper time,” said Moody gruffly. “He did seem to be a bit irritated with you after Black died, perhaps this is just a case of teenage rebellion.”

"Your theories are welcomed Alastor," said Dumbledore before he paused. "But Harry isn't really cunning enough to fake a kidnapping. It just isn't his style. Bless him, but the boy is an open book."

"Whatever you say Albus," said Moody. "I'll search around a bit more here and see if I can find anything that will help us locate Potter."

"Report back after your investigation is complete, Alastor and good luck," said Dumbledore, who looked anxious. Several hours had in fact past, which meant their window of opportunity was steadily decreasing. Moody began to turn the room where Potter had slept inside and out. While there was not much room given how small the area was, it would still take a bit of time. Any hint where Potter was, Moody vowed to locate. He would poke his way through every crack, every hole in the wall, until he was sure there would be nothing.

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Dumbledore sat in his office; he was not worried, at least not yet. Alastor was the best at what he did; he would find some clue, no matter how obtuse it was and hopefully it would point them towards the right direction. He looked at the monitoring instrument; Death Eaters had not stepped on the property. It would be glowing blacker than the darkest night if that was the case. He was more worried about the slowly fading blood protections. They were used as an anchor to bind Harry to the instrument, but he needed to remain at Number Four Privet Drive for thirty days in a one year period for it to work properly.

The other wards that Dumbledore placed made it even more vital for Harry to return to his home. Harry needed to trust Dumbledore completely for everything to go according to plan. By returning to the home of his Muggle relations, Harry was unwittingly agreeing to a loyalty oath towards Dumbledore. It was reinforced yearly along with the blood protections and it ensured Harry did not question Dumbledore's intentions with the young man too much. Dumbledore sensed Harry's magic rebelling against the loyalty oath, most notably over the past two summers. If Harry stopped the renewing of the blood protections, he would stop the reinforcement of the oath and cause it to become terminated. It could not be properly sealed until

Harry reached the age of maturity and by then, it would be time to maneuver the boy into his final fate.

Then there were other wards that helped put a limit on Harry's powers, restricting what he could do. Dumbledore feared that if Harry could fully grasp what he had the potential to do, then he could have someone who had the potential to make Lord Voldemort look like a girl scout. That could not be allowed to happen, even if Dumbledore had miscalculated, he could not take the chance. The wards technically were not dark magic, but they were frowned on by most in the Ministry and were a grey area. If caught using them, one could have been watched by the Ministry a bit more often and a bit more closely they would like to.

Still, Dumbledore regretted the necessity of what had to be done but it was something that could not be helped. He had only told Harry a fraction of the truth, there were other prophecies made that the Headmaster felt tied strongly into the upcoming war that would leave very few survivors. Besides, Harry knew so little about the Wizarding World that he was unable to make informed decisions and Dumbledore knew that he was doing what was best for everyone. Harry would understand when the dust had settled, that everything Dumbledore did was done for a reason.

He hoped Alastor would locate Harry, because the last thing he wanted was to call a full meeting involving the Order of the Phoenix. There were certain parties that had the potential to demand answers that Albus was unwilling to divulge.

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Harry and Daphne appeared with a pop just outside of the Leaky Cauldron, before they slipped inside before anyone could see them.

"I just don't know why we didn't just apparate straight here in the first place," said Harry, as his legs felt a bit sore from the long walk that Daphne had them take from the first place they had arrived and the Slytherin girl just looked at Harry, arms folded, a slightly annoyed look on her face.

“Because, if my guess is right, Dumbledore’s going to find out you left sooner rather than later,” said Daphne in a forced patience voice. “He’s likely to discover that someone disappeared out of that house and he will try to trace it. Knowing Dumbledore, he would succeed, but he would never expect us to walk on foot through three villages before we disappeared to the Leaky Cauldron.”

“If you say so,” replied Harry, whose head was swimming slightly and Daphne walked quickly forward into the Leaky Cauldron, which had very few people inside for obvious reasons.

“Potter, if you don’t start thinking like a Slytherin, you won’t last five minutes alone in the real world,” muttered Daphne under her breath but Harry just held his wand. “Just don’t use your wand Potter, unless no less than You-Know-Who is right in your face.”

“Let me guess, you think Dumbledore put a tracking spell on my wand and if I use it, he could find me,” said Harry with a bit of sarcasm in his voice.

“Would you put it past him?” asked Daphne coolly.

“No, not really,” admitted Harry. He wondered exactly what kind of game Dumbledore was playing. There were odd moments where he questioned the Hogwarts Headmaster’s motives, but those moments seemed to increase. “Why are we going to Diagon Alley of all places? Wouldn’t that be the last place I would want to be seen if I was on the run?”

“Yes, but we’re on a quest for something more important and while Dumbledore’s likely to chasing a false trail, this is the best time to get what we need,” said Daphne as they walked towards Gringotts. The bank never ceased to amaze Harry. “And what we need is answers. Since Dumbledore isn’t willing to cough them up, perhaps you can find someone who might in here.”

“Gringotts?” asked Harry in surprise.

“Yes, I know, goblins are blood thirsty bastards that would sell their own mothers for a few Galleons, but that can be a benefit, if the price

is right, you'll be surprised with what they might part with, especially if it hurts the interests of other humans," said Daphne in a cynical voice. "Just don't try to act too nice to them, because they'll think you're up to something and don't show any fear. Remember, as the head of an old pureblood family, it's your duty to act superior to goblins."

"What in the bloody hell do you mean, my duty as the head of a pureblood family?" asked Harry. "That's the second time you mentioned that..."

"You might need to learn more than I thought, Potter," interrupted Daphne. "Especially if my understanding of the laws were correct, Dumbledore sending you to those Muggles broke at least one ancient pureblood family law."

"WHAT?" demanded Harry in surprise; this was the first he had ever heard of any of this and he doubted the surprises were finished. In fact, he suspected they had only just begun and Daphne just refused to acknowledge his outburst, rather motioning for him to follow her inside the bank. The lobby inside the bank was swarming with very surly looking goblins. It had been a while since Harry had entered the bank and perhaps it was just his imagination, but the goblins seemed to be surlier than usual as they looked towards Daphne and Harry as they entered the bank. It had been a few years since Harry had been to Gringotts, the last two years, Mrs. Weasley had done his shopping.

"Ministry employees scammed them, so they're a bit testy towards humans, so don't say anything stupid, Potter," said Daphne and Harry paused, wincing as he closed his eyes.

"Damn, Bagman," muttered Harry under his breath and Daphne just looked at him but decided not to ask him anything, as they approached the front counter, where an extremely surly looking goblin looked back towards them.

"What is it, human?" demanded the goblin, who seemed very agitated by the fact that he had to breath the same air as a human did.

"I want to inquire about the status of my vault as I seem to have misplaced my key," said Harry, thinking of the first thing that came to

mind as the goblin muttered something about incompetent humans, before he adopted a business like tone as he looked towards Harry.

"Name," said the goblin roughly.

"Harry Potter," responded Harry in a firm voice, not trying to let the goblin know that the creature looked like he wanted to take Harry's head off and mount it on his office wall.

"I see, Mr. Potter, you are to come this way, to see if you are who you say you are," responded the goblin roughly. "If you are, the vault key will vanish and be replaced by a new one."

"And if I'm not?" asked Harry, morbid curiosity getting the better of him.

"For your sake you've better have written a will," said the goblin viciously as he turned, leading Harry down to the room, with Daphne following closely behind. Several goblins looked off to the side, holding spears with razor sharp blades, ready to impale anyone who had made any sudden movements. Daphne looked unsurprised and Harry tried to convey the fact that he was not intimidated at all by the goblins, no matter how intimidating they looked. The goblin pushed open a door, leading to an office, which looked more like a dungeon. The chairs were stiff and wooden; the entire room was only sufficiently lit by the candles inside. Harry and Daphne were motioned to sit down and they did, in the most uncomfortable of seats. The goblin pulled out a stone slab and a knife with what looked like a miniature human skull on the handle. With a sneer, the goblin turned his attention to Harry, and roughly grabbed his arm, before swiping the knife across it. Harry made a movement to fight it but Daphne roughly shook her head, as blood dripped on the wooden slab.

Seconds passed, even though if they felt like moments, and much to Harry's surprise, not one key appeared but three vault keys appeared.

"And what might I ask is that?" asked Harry.

"The key to your vaults, Potter," responded the goblin stiffly.

“Vaults?” questioned Harry, he had only thought he had the one vault and while he did not have enough gold to by and sell anyone he wanted, he was still not poor.

“Yes, vaults, the plural form of vault, as in you have more than one,” retorted the goblin in a snide voice, which Daphne seemed very amused by. “I guess they don’t teach you humans singular and plural forms of words these days.”

“What are these vaults?” asked Harry, ignoring the mocking tone of the goblin, in fact, he was getting slightly angered. Being polite was not going to be an issue, as the goblins attitude towards humans gave him no reason to believe so.

“Well you know of the Potter family vault, the one that we have recorded you having transactions out of five times previously, once a year,” answered the goblin stiffly. “There are two others that you have. One is the Black family vault, gained on a technicality but never the less, you do have it, even though it has been contested twice already. Sirius Black was never legally disowned and never received a trial, so within goblin law, it is well within the rights to pass the vault onto you giving his passing.”

“And the third vault?” asked Harry, who tried to not show his grief with Sirius’s death.

“The Hogwarts Vault, given the fact that you are the last living heir to any of the founders, Salazar Slytherin in fact,” said the goblin and Harry felt his brain shut down based off of this little bombshell.

“That can’t be right, Lord Voldemort is the heir of Salazar Slytherin,” stated Harry. “There has to be some mistake...”

“Gringotts makes no mistakes, Mr. Potter,” said the goblin in a firm voice. “It appears I will have to take a bit of my time to educate an ignorant human. When Lord Voldemort attempted to murder you on that night, his power broke and he forfeited all the Hogwarts assets to you, a respectable amount of gold and properties I might add. Maybe not the richest wizard in the world, but perhaps the richest free wizard in the world given Lucius Malfoy’s recent extended stay within



Azkaban. There may be others abroad, but within this country, you are a valuable commodity.”

“Since You-Know-Who returned, can he reclaim the Hogwarts assets?” asked Daphne, speaking up and the goblin looked at her.

“No, Lord Voldemort is unable to hold an account at Gringotts due to the nature of the ritual that returned him to a state of existence,” responded the goblin. “Not life Mr. Potter, merely existence, he may have a body, with powers and intelligence, but there is a price with such rituals that prevent the person undertaking them from ever truly being alive. And there is another problem that would prevent Lord Voldemort from claiming the assets of Hogwarts.”

“And that is?” asked Harry.

“He never knew about them either,” responded the goblin. “I suspect Dumbledore may have, but he had withheld vital information that would have pointed Lord Voldemort in the right direction. As was the agreement, if all of the heirs of the Founders had died, the Hogwarts assets would revert to the Headmaster or Headmistress.”

Daphne just smirked at that, a nice little conspiracy theory forming in her head.

“Why wasn’t I told of these vaults?” asked Harry.

“You never asked,” replied the goblin nastily. “I can, of course, get you a complete list of all of your assets, for a small fee of course. It is within your rights to request it as an adult.”

“Wait a minute, I don’t become of age until I’m seventeen,” responded Harry in a confused voice and Daphne responded with a sigh.

“Did you complete your Ordinary Wizarding Level examinations?” asked the goblin and Harry responded with a nod. “And you are the last living magical human in your family?”

“As far as I know,” answered Harry.

“Well we do know for a fact that you are, otherwise, you would not have been allowed to access the Potter family vault,” said the goblin roughly. “As the last remaining heir of one of the fifteen old families, you are the heir and thus entitled to be considered an adult after completion of your Ordinary Wizarding Level exams.”

“Seventeen old families?” asked Harry.

“Do they teach you humans anything in History of Magic anymore?” questioned the goblin in an agitated voice.

“Well it’s not Potter’s fault he is so ignorant, he did grow up with Muggles,” offered Daphne and the goblin just rose to his feet. It was very rare that a goblin was shocked but it was managed by this revelation.

“That’s impossible, according to the laws, this human was supposed to be placed with a pureblood family of at least five generations of lineage, so he could learn magical culture and not embarrass himself...like he’s doing right now,” answered the goblin as he trailed off.

“It’s true, I was sent there, apparently because of some sort of blood protection that Albus Dumbledore put into place,” said Harry and the goblin looked suddenly excited for some reason. It was a very scary sight.

“Potter, we will conduct a full survey of your Muggle family home, to see what these so called blood protections really are,” said the goblin, who could smell fraud a mile away, this was an obvious scheme for Dumbledore to get his filthy hands on the Hogwarts assets, by eliminating the final heir. Besides, the goblin nation had wanted to bust Dumbledore for decades. “Don’t worry, Potter, it will only cost fifty Galleons.”

“Dumbledore will know something is up if goblins come onto the property,” argued Harry. “He’s likely looking for me right now anyway.”

“Remain in this room, not even Lord Voldemort will be able to touch you and I will return within the hour to conclude our business,” stated the goblin roughly as he closed the door, leaving Harry and Daphne alone in the room.

“You know Potter, that was rather polite for a goblin,” said Daphne who had a look of smug satisfaction on her face.

“Must be my charming good looks,” stated Harry dryly.

“Don’t flatter yourself Potter,” said Daphne but she snuck a look at him. The clothes he was wearing detracted from his appearance but with the proper wardrobe and a more confident attitude, he could be one of the best looking wizards out there. He had potential, in more ways than one, but Daphne knew she had to find a way to force it out for it to be of any use to either of them.

“What are the fifteen families anyway?” asked Harry suddenly.

“Fifteen heads of very prominent and influential families that made up the first version of the Wizengamot during the founding of the Ministry of Magic,” explained Daphne. “I don’t know all of the names, but Potter was one of them, so was Black, I think Bones and Longbottom were the two of them, there were a couple of names that either died out or married into other families. I do remember being amused that there was not a Malfoy to be found, however. I bet Draco threw a fit when he found that out, altering history is one of the things that his money can’t really buy”

“This is the second time that you mentioned Malfoy with disdain,” said Harry unable to help himself and Daphne just responded with a small smirk.

“You can’t believe all of us worship the ground that Draco Malfoy spits on, some of the Slytherins get annoyed just as much with him like the rest of the world,” said Daphne. “But we put up with him because of who his Father is. Now that Daddy’s in jail, I think young Draco’s in for a rude awakening.”

“We can only hope,” responded Harry, who got great pleasure in seeing Draco Malfoy being taken down a peg or two. “You still haven’t told me anything, you know a lot about me and I know hardly anything about you.”

“Well it isn’t my fault that you’re an open book who has to tell all of his secrets,” said Daphne as she looked at Harry, who folded his arms, looking rather irritated with the lack of trust the girl was showing him. “Potter, you’ll know when I need you to know. It’s a bit of a delicate situation.”

“That’s reassuring,” grumbled Harry.

“Potter, I know you hate people keeping things from you, but I will tell you soon, I swear,” said Daphne, who was thinking quickly. She was running out of time and she did need Potter’s help, but wondered exactly how to approach asking him about this. She had exchanged more words with him over the past few hours than five years at Hogwarts. As hyped as his accomplishments were, underneath it all, he was nothing but a confused teenager with little knowledge of his rights and responsibilities. Not to mention the potential of the great power and influence he could wield.

“I’ll take your word for it,” said Harry after a moment’s pause. “The problem is Dumbledore isn’t going to give this up without a fight even if he has no legal power over me.”

“No, that is a minor annoyance with him,” agreed Daphne as time passed and the two teenagers sat in the room, awaiting the return of the goblin so the business at Gringotts could be concluded.

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Alastor Moody grumbled, what he thought was a profitable avenue to track down Mr. Potter, had been nothing but a dead end. He prepared to call this entire day a bust as he walked down the stairs and saw several figures moving outside the house quickly. Moody walked as quickly as his wooden leg would allow him as he burst out the front door, as he looked at the goblins. The creatures paid him little mind as he took steps forward.

“Step back human, we have an investigation to complete and you will not be allowed to intervene in it,” said the goblin violently, as he brushed past Moody, with a metallic rod in his hand. The rod was beeping, as several other goblins made notes on pieces of parchment, each on them having looks that appeared to be both excited and menacing on their face at once.

“I demand to know what’s going on, I’m investigating a kidnapping,” said Moody gruffly as he held his wand but the goblins were not intimidated.

“This is Gringotts business human, nothing that you should be concerned by,” stated the lead goblin as more notes were made but they paused. “Rest assure, if you are here for the reasons that we think you are, than take this information back that Harry Potter is safe and no humans are allowed to intervene with this investigation or they will be imprisoned within Gringotts.”

“What of the Muggles that reside here?” demanded Moody.

“Already removed and sent to Gringotts for questioning, we have reason to suspect that are accomplices of the crimes that have been committed here,” said the lead goblin as he pointed a spear towards Moody. “You have two minutes to vacate the property or you will loose your other eye.”

Moody paused for a second but nodded, he would have to leave. Dumbledore would want to know about this at any rate and then he could deal with the goblins

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Dumbledore waited, it had been two hours since Moody had left but the fire in his office came to life, revealing the very frantic face of Molly Weasley appearing in the fire.

“Albus, thank Merlin you’re there, something happened, something awful!” cried Molly in a horrified voice and Dumbledore nodded his head slightly, to continue. “Well, I was going to take a trip to Diagon

Alley to pick up the school supplies this year for the children, Harry included, and as I was about to grab his vault key, it disappeared. Vanished completely into thin air, I don't know how this could have happened, do you?"

"Not the slightest clue, Molly," answered Dumbledore but naturally he had his ideas. He feared that Moody's theory about Harry running off on his own could have been correct but Dumbledore was at a loss as to how. Harry had limited contacts within the Wizarding World and those who he was close to, were also those who would never go against Dumbledore's wishes, for Harry's own protection, of course. "This is very troubling; hopefully I can get into contact with Gringotts and get the matter resolved as soon as possible."

"I don't know if they would allow you to obtain another key without Harry being present, the goblins have been keeping a very close eye on humans and have been restricted them whenever possible, they just laid off all of the human employees," said Molly in a frantic voice, as she looked on the verge of having a nervous breakdown.

"I know, Bill informed me of the situation," said Dumbledore, who realized that the goblins must have found out about the connection that Bill Weasley had to the Order of the Phoenix. For some reason, the goblins had it out for Dumbledore and had treated him with disdain. Given the scandal with Bagman, goblin-human relations were at the lowest point possible without another goblin rebellion breaking out. "As for obtaining another key, postpone the shopping trip until next week and I will have to figure out a solution to obtain a replacement as soon as possible."

"Harry is still coming for his birthday, Albus," said Molly.

"Yes, Molly he will be," said Dumbledore carefully.

"Good, it will do him some good to get away from those awful Muggles, they can't be feeding him properly," answered Molly, who looked worried for Harry's health and Dumbledore thought it was good that he neglected to tell Molly that Harry had in fact been missing for the past few hours. He could just imagine the rant.

“Yes, I suspect Harry will want to see his plans, but perhaps you have just misplaced the key,” said Albus.

“I saw it disappear right before my very eyes!” shouted Molly.

“Yes, well, if you are mistaken, get in touch,” said Dumbledore who closed his eyes, hearing a knock on his office door. Moody had returned from his investigation and Dumbledore quickly terminated the Floo call with Molly, to turn his attention to Moody, who walked into the office.

“We have a situation Dumbledore, goblins are nosing around outside, scanning the property and taking all sorts of notes,” said Moody and Dumbledore looked grave, but Moody was far from finished. “What’s worse is that they nabbed those Muggle relations of Potters and took them to Gringotts for an investigation of some sort. I wonder why the goblins would be deciding to just randomly show up at this time.”

“I’m sure you have come up with at least one theory,” said Dumbledore calmly, with a twinkle in his eye.

“The fact that Potter had not been in Gringotts for nearly three years might have set up a warning flag towards them, they expect to see their wealthy customers in person more often,” said Moody. “They may believe some sort of fraud has been committed against Gringotts and are investigating that...”

“That is the reason I sent Molly Weasley to do the required shopping and she has removed not one Knut more than she needs for the school supplies for Harry, trust me, I would know if she was swiping more than she needed,” said Dumbledore firmly and in fact, for once, he was telling the truth.

“What baffles me is why the goblins would be scanning the property, it’s almost like they’re looking for wards that are placed around the property,” stated Moody and Dumbledore sprung to his feet. If the goblins located his wards, fifteen years of hard work would be flushed right down the toilet. “Goblins nabbed him and...”

"I never expected this," said Dumbledore but he did fear that Harry would stumble across all of the assets he was entitled to. Adding the ramifications of that up the laws that Dumbledore had to get around with Harry for the Greater Good and things were getting rather grim.

"Well, who would," offered Moody grimly. "I don't know the extent of what you've done, but judging by the look on your face, it's something that you would have liked to keep under wraps."

"I still haven't lost Harry yet, the boy doesn't know enough to deal with the responsibilities he has, he will have to return to us, he has no place to go, then steps can be taken," muttered Dumbledore and Moody just responded with a shrug.

Still Dumbledore was not worried, not yet. The goblins could not remove the wards he had put in place but if Harry was not returned home within the next day, the wards would terminate themselves. He was unwilling to accept failure yet.

"Now what Albus?" asked Moody.

"I will speak with Miss Granger and Mr. Weasley, perhaps Harry has offered them some insight of his state of mind that might point us in the right direction and if all else fails, I will request meeting with the senior goblins of Gringotts," said Dumbledore, who had to work fast if he wanted to salvage this mess.

Chapter Two is in the books and Chapter Three is coming, featuring your daily recommended dose of Vitamin Voldemort.



### Chapter Three: We Keep Changing the Questions

“Oh, good morning Albus, I didn’t expect to see you today,” remarked Molly as she was caught off guard by the Hogwarts Headmaster, who had a business like expression on his face. “There isn’t something wrong. Have you found anything out about Harry’s key?”

“No, Molly but rest assure I’m investigating the matter thoroughly,” said Dumbledore. “I was wondering if I could speak to Ron and Hermione on a matter requiring Harry. Harry already knows this but I thought it would be fitting to inform them. It’s nothing life threatening or anything the Order does not know, I can assure you that.”

Naturally, there was no way that Molly would have denied Dumbledore this request but it was best to politely request things. People tended to be more susceptible in this case. It took Molly a few seconds before she responded.

“Oh of course, I don’t see any harm, just a moment, I’ll call them right away,” said Molly before she turned slightly, as Dumbledore made himself at home in the kitchen. Hopefully Harry could be located before he found out that he actually owned this house because he could demand the right to attend Order meetings or kick them out. It was his magical right as owner of the home and Dumbledore could not allow them to be removed, it would take months to set up a new Headquarters from scratch. “RON, HERMIONE! Come down stairs, now, Professor Dumbledore is here and he wishes to speak with both of you!”

A pause as Ron and Hermione were down the stairs a couple of minutes later and they walked towards the kitchen, as Dumbledore gave Molly a look and the woman got his message right away. She departed from the kitchen and Dumbledore turned to Ron and Hermione, who looked at Dumbledore with confusion. The Headmaster had barely interacted with them unless Harry was involved.

“Please sit down,” said Dumbledore and Ron and Hermione did so, but both of them were curious. While Dumbledore was trying to maintain that nothing was the matter, there was still a look on his face

that betrayed that there is some worry and Hermione caught it right away.

"It's about Harry, isn't it?" asked Hermione. "He isn't in any trouble, is he?"

"No, Hermione, Harry's not in any danger, but with the death of his godfather, I was wondering if any of you had heard anything from Harry, as his state of mind might be a bit suspect," said Dumbledore calmly.

"No, Headmaster, didn't you tell us that we shouldn't write to Harry, because any communication might be intercepted?" asked Ron coolly. He actually did some thinking and if anyone could figure out a way to send letters back and forth safely, it would be Dumbledore. However, for whatever reason, the Headmaster chose not to.

"Yes, Mr. Weasley, it was true, but Harry might have sent letters to you and I was wondering if he might have mentioned anything," said Dumbledore.

"Well, Harry did send one letter after I wrote to him," commented Hermione carefully and Dumbledore looked at her like he was disappointed at her for not following instruction. "I'm sorry Headmaster, but I had to write to him, he isn't able to cope well. You know how his temper is and the fact he had to return to the Dursleys after all he's been through didn't help matter. I was just worried for him..."

"Admirable Miss Granger but I do hope that no one had intercepted the letter," said Dumbledore, as Ron felt his temper rise but he managed to just barely keep it in check. He was trying to make it out like Hermione was the one in the wrong here and she was only concerned for Harry's well being. "What did he write back?"

"He said he felt he shouldn't tell me anything how he was feeling because the letter might get intercepted," said Hermione who looked almost frantic. "I knew something like this would happen, Harry's mad at us, surely there is some way that we could get letters to him without them being intercepted?"

"I'm afraid that can't be done, Miss Granger," said Dumbledore in his best grandfatherly voice. Of course, it could be done but it would not serve where Harry needed to go. His emotions needed to be erratic and unbalanced for everything to go into place. "If there was a way, I would do it, but right now, it's impossible."

"I don't see why Harry has to be with those foul people," argued Hermione. "Harry would be better off with people who don't mistreat him and..."

"Miss Granger, once again, your concern is admirable, but there are reasons why Harry needs to remain with his family," said Dumbledore calmly. "Everything will work out in the end, trust me."

"Oh of course, Professor, you do have your reasons," said Hermione with a frown. She worried about Harry but still, Dumbledore had the best interests for everyone in mind. "I'm sorry I had doubted you."

"No, Miss Granger, concern is nothing to apologize of but there is a reason for these measures to be taken and Harry will be perfectly safe, until the time he is brought here three days from now," said Dumbledore calmly as he surveyed the two children, almost if determining whether or not everything had been told to him. "Is there anything else that Harry might have said before he left Hogwarts that might be of concern?"

Both Ron and Hermione shook their heads and as Dumbledore feared, this was going to be a dead end. His plan to isolate Harry had worked too well, he doubted that he even told Ron or Hermione about the Prophecy.

"Well very well then, just one last favor, do not mention this meeting to anyone, including Harry or your parents," said Dumbledore.

"Of course we won't, Professor Dumbledore," said Hermione but Ron just sat there. Dumbledore paid his lack of response no mind at all, the boy always followed what Hermione said, her great trust in authority figures blinding her. Naturally he could not come out and ask her to spy on Harry, she might rebel against that, but a few

leading questions and obtaining the rest of the information through Legilimency.

“Very good then, enjoy the rest of your summer then, I must be on my way,” said Dumbledore as he walked off. The moment Dumbledore left, Molly returned to the kitchen and Ron and Hermione took that as their cue to leave, as it was still about an hour until lunch at any rate.

Hermione made a movement to go up the stairs but Ron decided to speak up.

“There is more to everything than Dumbledore is telling us,” responded Ron and Hermione looked at him like he had grown two heads.

“I’m sure if Harry was in danger, he would tell us, we’re his friends, we have a right to know,” answered Hermione.

“I don’t know, Hermione, just something about how Dumbledore was talking just seemed like he was not telling us the entire truth,” said Ron in an uncertain voice. Something about this entire mess involving Harry over the past couple of years, ever since the end of the Triwizard Tournament seemed off and he could not put his finger on it.

“Ron, he’s Dumbledore,” said Hermione but Ron did not seem too swayed by this argument, much to Hermione’s surprise. “What reason would he have to lie to us?”

“I’m sure he has his reasons, Hermione,” said Ron, matching her tone from earlier and that got him a nasty glare that cause him to back off. “What reason does he have to tell us the truth? I mean, to the Order, we’re just children. It’s not like we have done anything like help Harry clean up Dumbledore’s messes or anything dangerous like that. Nothing at all...”

“Ron, enough, please, Dumbledore said there was nothing wrong and he’s never lied to us before,” said Hermione.

“He might not be lying, but he’s leaving out a good portion of the truth,” responded Ron. “Do you support him or Harry?”

“Harry, of course, but that shouldn’t even be a question, I mean we’re all on the same side, fighting Voldemort,” said Hermione as she paused for the obligatory flinch at Voldemort’s name. “It’s just that if we can’t trust Dumbledore, I mean who can be trust.”

“Exactly Hermione, I don’t know, I trust you and Harry and my family to an extent when Dumbledore’s not telling them which way to jump, although not Percy as much anymore after what he put Mum and Dad through, but after that, I don’t know if I can trust anyone,” said Ron. “It’s just that Dumbledore’s leaving something out about Harry and...”

“Enough Ron, Dumbledore will tell us what’s necessary,” said Hermione in a tone that left no room for argument but she was conflicted. Harry had definitely been up to Dumbledore’s office and looked like he had been put on death row after he returned, but he had not once mentioned what Dumbledore told him. Dumbledore had to have the best interests for everyone in mind but at the same time, she considered Harry the brother she never had. It given a choice, Hermione would side with Harry in a heartbeat but that should not even be something that she had to choose. They were all on the same side.

Weren’t they?

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“Our sweep of the residence of your Muggle relations has concluded, Mr. Potter,” responded the goblin, as he walked into the office, where Harry and Daphne had remained sitting for six hours. Both of them had grown very impatient for various reasons. “The entire list of wards have be found and can be read at your leisure but I shall go over some of the finer points of what intriguing and borderline illegal surprises Dumbledore left on your property.”

“Do so,” prompted Harry firmly and the goblin took his notes, reading them carefully.

“First of all, the good, there was a ward that would inform Dumbledore of anyone with a dark mark arriving within a fifty

kilometer radius of the Dursley property on all sides,” said the goblin before he got to the truly interesting information. The information that would get Dumbledore before a goblin council and convicted, with the penalty being execution should they ever got their hands on Dumbledore. “Now, the blood protection wards, they were the weakest thing possible. They only offered most minimum protection possible. I would not be far off in saying that there was a mutual dislike between you and your relatives.”

“Given what I saw, that seemed pretty likely,” said Daphne as Harry nodded. She was still appalled that an heir to one of the fifteen families was treated like this.

“Well your relatives will be the subject of a length and painful questioning,” said the goblin and Harry just responded with a nod, not knowing what else he could say. “Other wards, including a renewing oath declaring your unquestioning loyalty to Albus Dumbledore...”

“WHAT!” shouted Harry. “I never agreed to such a thing...”

“Technically you did by returning to the Dursley property year after year for a period of one month and one week,” explained the goblin, who narrowed his eyes in irritation at the human interrupting him. “The sinister beauty of this is since Dumbledore told you had to return, you had to obey him before the year window of the loyalty oath expired and thus renewed the oath. Unfortunately for Dumbledore, he tied it within the blood protection, along with all of his other goodies and within the next day, everything would collapse. Upon your seventeenth birthday, the oath would become permanent.”

“Exactly how long do I have before the blood protection collapses?” asked Harry, who felt the longer he stayed away, the more he was inclined to tell Dumbledore to stick his orders in a very uncomfortable place.

“Twenty seven hours,” said the goblin briskly but there was more. “Our sources have revealed that you have acquired your Parseltongue abilities through your defeat Lord Voldemort.”

“Correct, but who told you this?” asked Harry but the goblin just chose to disregard his question.

“Do you find it odd that you have acquired no other abilities after that night?” questioned the goblin.

“As a matter of fact, yes, that is odd, surely someone like Voldemort would have more talents than just Parseltongue,” said Harry. “The wandless magic...”

“No, I’m afraid that is not one of the talents you acquired through Lord Voldemort, that is your own ability shining through,” said the goblin and Daphne looked surprised. Wandless magic had never been attributed to Potters. Perhaps Harry had gotten that through his mother’s side of the family, not that anyone would claim that a Muggleborn had a rare magical talent. “More wards were put into place by Dumbledore, putting restraints on your power. Obviously, he could not completely block it, it would leave you a brain dead vegetable and even Dumbledore would not go to those extremes.”

Harry just gave a disbelieving snort. The more he learned, the less he was trusting Dumbledore.

“What powers did Dumbledore so generously decide to protect me from?” asked Harry calmly.

“With fine tuning and hard work, your magic should be at a stronger level, giving what we have been able to determine,” responded the goblin stiffly. “Also, you appear to have natural talents in Occlumency and Legilimency received from your defeat of Lord Voldemort. They do manifest at the oddest times, as there is evidence that your magic was fighting the restrictions.”

That was a piece of news that put Harry in a really foul mood. In fact, he was incensed beyond belief. He could have avoided months of torment from Snape attacking his mind, had he been able to access his talents and abilities.

“Of course, Dumbledore would want to make sure his weapon is not thinking any thoughts that might not match up to his agenda, he

wants to keep tabs on him, make sure he isn't being exposed to any unnatural influences," said Harry in an agitated tone of voice. "No wonder why he had Snape assault my mind, he wanted to weaken my resistance against what he was doing..."

"What about Snape assaulting your mind?" asked Daphne coolly.

"Snape tried to teach me Occlumency, fat lot of help that did, all he did was assault my mind for an hour for three or four months twice a week and tell me to close my mind, without offering any insight as to how I'm supposed to do that," said Harry and Daphne just responded, rolling her eyes. "What did I do this time?"

"It's almost like you trusted that Snape would teach you or rather that since Dumbledore ordered Snape to teach you, you trusted that he would not try and damage your mind," said Daphne. To be honest, she never really trusted Dumbledore or his intentions. That was like an unwritten rule in Slytherin. He always seemed to have some agenda at hand but this was far beyond anything that anyone could imagine. He was truly a kinder, gentler version of Voldemort.

"No, but given the loyalty oath, I had no choice," said Harry.

"Point taken, Potter," responded Daphne shortly.

"Anything else?" inquired Harry.

"Plenty more, but nothing worth my time," said the goblin roughly. "The entire list is here. I trust you have been taught to read?"

Harry refused to dignify with a response.

"Just hand over the list and take me down to my vaults, I want to see what I have," said Harry in a commanding voice and the goblin just surveyed him before nodding and walked off. Daphne followed, making plans for what they would have to do when they left the bank. One thing was for sure, that wardrobe that Potter had would have to go and be replaced by something more fitting of a head of one of the fifteen families.



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Neville Longbottom was in his room, just drifting off to sleep, thinking about what had happened over the past month since returning from Hogwarts. He thought his grandmother would kill him for breaking his father's wand in the battle with the Death Eaters, but she seemed to be oddly proud at him, finally living up to the reputation of his parents. She had told him he would receive a new wand for his birthday. Neville was looking forward to having a wand to call his own. Over the past year, he had improved with the work in the D.A. and had a feeling that he would improve even more with his own wand.

He thought about what Harry had taught him and many others. They learned more about Defense from Harry with the possible exception of Lupin and maybe the imposter Moody. It had allowed Neville, along with Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Luna, and Harry to hold their own in the Department of Mysteries. The fact did remain that they were fighting wizards and one witch who highly underestimated them because they were children and some who had been coming off of years of intense exposure to Dementors. They still had a long way to go and had circumstances been different, it could have ended badly for the six members of the D.A.

Still, Harry had lead them the best he could and at least managed to fight off the Death Eaters long enough until other help arrived.

A crash from downstairs had caused Neville to awaken from his semi-conscious state. Another crash and he heard an alarm going on from downstairs, along with several loud cackles, including one very familiar voice.

"Can whittle Neville come out and pway?" cooed a mock baby voice downstairs and there was the sounds of battle, as Neville sprang to his feet. Gryffindor courage overrode the common sense by the fact he had no wand and his grandmother was downstairs, she needed assistance. She was tough but at the same time, based on the voices that Neville heard, she was overwhelmed.

Neville moved down the stairs, as another loud crash and a flash of light. He moved his way down the stairs, as the unconscious body of

one of the Death Eaters was slumped on the bottom step and he saw his grandmother fighting, but not for long, as a jet of sickly yellow light struck her in the chest. She was launched into the air and landed right on the back of her neck, snapping it instantly. Neville moved down, picking up the wand from right by the unconscious Death Eater and started attacking the Death Eaters.

“STUPEFY!” shouted Neville, as a stunning spell struck one of the Death Eaters in the chest. Neville turned as a grey light soured in the air of him. “Protego.”

The daggers created by the spell just bounced off the dagger and Neville managed to propel one of his adversaries right into the wall. Bellatrix turned as Neville turned his attention to her. The same purple light that injured Hermione in the Department of Mysteries was sent directly at him.

“Protego,” said Neville in desperation and he was forced back, but thankfully all of his internal organs were intact. He turned around, before Bellatrix turned around, throwing another dangerous looking spell at Neville. “Protego.”

Another Death Eater was knocked down, as he attempted to strike Neville from behind. Bellatrix looked at Neville with a crazed expression on her face.

“I broke your granny boy, just like I mentally broke your parents,” said Bellatrix in an insane voice, as she tried to remove Neville’s internal organs with another deadly curse but the boy managed to avoid the attacks and fought back. “Just like I’m going to break you. CRUCIO!”

Neville screamed as the pain had overwhelmed in. Bellatrix looked at him, with a twisted smile on her face, as he screamed in agony, before he dropped down on his knees, screaming in pain. He tried to fight the pain but it was too great. His parents were considered among the greatest Aurors, yet their minds snapped. Death Eaters drove his parents insane because they could. They walked into his house and killed his grandmother, just because they could.

Now Bellatrix was going to drive Neville insane, just because she could.

“Don’t be scared, Longbottom, you will soon join your parents, driven completely and utterly mad,” said Bellatrix, who looked gleeful as the pain but Neville managed to raise his arm, shakily and just barely was able to throw off the curse. Bellatrix was distracted from holding the curse by her taunting and found herself knocked off balance. Neville could barely stand and she would only be knocked off balance for a moment. Somehow, he got to his feet.

“STUPEFY!” shouted Neville desperately but Bellatrix blocked the spell, while cackling madly.

“Come on, Longbottom, a stunning spell, your parents will be ashamed of you,” cackled Bellatrix.

“INCENDIO!” yelled Neville. Technically fire spells were of little effect against humans but the blasts of fire had knocked Bellatrix off balance just enough for him to catch his breath. Bellatrix was on her feet, as he racked his brain for something to use against Bellatrix. His mind flashed back to his first year and hoped this would work. “Petrificus Totalus.”

Bellatrix managed to block the spell but a second casting of the full body bind managed to partially work, just enough for her arms to snap to her sides, causing her to be unable to lift her wand to block any spells.

“Stupefy!” yelled Neville and Bellatrix was knocked unconscious. He stood over her, now he had the person who had tortured his parents. Looking around, it just occurred to him that there were more Death Eaters here than he remembered knocking out and looked around.

That was the last thing that went through his head, before he was knocked unconscious. From the shadows, appeared the face of Lord Voldemort. A sneer appeared on his chalk white face, with his slit red eyes looking down on the unconscious form of Neville Longbottom, as a few Death Eaters stepped out of the shadows. Voldemort turned to Bellatrix, reviving her.

“So this is one of the children who embarrassed my Inner Circle,” said Voldemort in an unimpressed voice. “Take the boy to our base, we will figure out what he knows and once we have ripped all the information from his brain, eliminate him.”

The Death Eaters nodded, with Bellatrix roughly pulling the unconscious wizard to his feet, angered that she had not only lost, but had failed when the Dark Lord had been watching. She had fallen in favor slightly ever since the Department of Mysteries, along with the other Death Eaters involved in that battle. The fact that an attempted attack on the Weasley home, blowing it up with them inside had been foiled. The house had been destroyed but the Weasleys had an advanced warning that allowed them to escape. It mattered little, that family of blood traitors would be killed, it was just a matter of when.

Still the Longbottom boy might know something that would be of use, as Lord Voldemort wished to know how a group of school children had gotten good enough to match his Inner Circle.

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It was late into the evening where Harry had found himself in a private section of the Leaky Cauldron with Daphne. During his entire day with the Slytherin, he had come to one basic conclusion.

He hated shopping. Especially for clothes. He thought it was impossible to shop for the amount of time that Daphne convinced him to, how she did it, he would never know. Still six bloody hours just for clothes was passing in the realm of being ridiculous. He could more than afford the extravagant clothes but still; it was a tedious process that Harry decided not to spend too much time on. The books were one thing; there were things he needed to know that Dumbledore sure was not going to tell him.

“Now that you have a wardrobe more fitting of a wizard of your station, I expect you will burn all of your other clothes,” said Daphne shortly as she looked at Harry.

“The Muggle clothes I can understand needing something more fitting than Dudley’s castoffs, but there is nothing wrong with my robes,” said Harry.

“Well there is nothing wrong with them, if you were a common pureblood at the lower rungs of society, just above the Weasleys with actually the money to buy decent clothes, but nothing too extravagant,” said Daphne as she looked at Harry calmly. He was wearing a powerful glamour spell, courtesy of the goblins, who managed to disguise Harry’s very familiar appearance, for a fee of course. That appeared to be the motto of the goblin nation. “Look, Potter, there are certain things that people expect from you. Right or wrong, the fact is they expect them or they will think they can walk all over you. If you look like you are important or influential, people might think twice about trying anything.”

Harry just nodded. He knew very little of this and judging by the books that Daphne had recommended him, he had a lot to learn. It took him a few seconds to realize that she was looking through the report on the wards.

“Mind relaxing wards, no wonder you seem to be a bit dim at times, Potter,” stated Daphne as she read over the print out and she decided to answer his unasked question. “It causes you to only due the minimum possible to learn and pass your classes.”

“Dumbledore needed to keep me in Hogwarts, but he didn’t want me to learn too much, otherwise I might have started asking the wrong questions,” said Harry as he looked at the list. “Restraints on my magic as well...”

“Yes, you possess a lot of magical potential, its all there, you’ll need months of training and study to perfect it,” answered Daphne, who was grudgingly impressed at the potential Harry had. “Once those blood protections break, then I would begin doing what’s necessary to learn how to use that power right away. Fortunately, you can access one of the largest libraries in the world without question.”

Harry nodded. According to what little information he managed to force out of the goblins, his right as an heir to a Founder of Hogwarts

gave him unlimited access to all parts of the school, including the restricted section of the library. Now he understood why Voldemort had learned so much in such a short time.

"The problem is the tracking charm placed on your wand," replied Daphne with a sigh, as she was in deep thought. "Especially considering if it was placed there by Albus Dumbledore, that could lead to a problem. Do you know when Dumbledore might have slipped it in on your wand?"

"Maybe when I was knocked unconscious after I saved the Philosopher's Stone from Voldemort during my first year," suggested Harry and Daphne looked at him with a slightly confused, slightly irritated look on her face. "What did I do this time?"

"Potter, the Philosopher's Stone has been inside a heavily warded manor for the past fifty years, the last time that the Flamels have been seen in public after a group of dark wizards tried to steal it," answered Daphne with a frown but she shook her head to clear it but a look of utter fury appeared on Potter's face. "Potter calm down before you have a stroke."

"If the Philosopher's Stone has been locked up for fifty years, then what did I save from Voldemort?" asked Harry his tone icy cold.

"A carefully duplicated fake, most likely," commented Daphne. "Dumbledore did work with Flamel, he would have known enough to make an accurate duplicate, but one that did nothing. I doubt Flamel trusted him with that much knowledge. It's not an account that is in many places, but it is well known in certain circles in the Wizarding World."

"So let me get this straight, Dumbledore put a fake Philosopher's Stone in the school, as bait for Voldemort or...to test me for some reason, maybe to see if there were any other steps that he needed to take to control me," responded Harry slowly and Daphne responded with a nod. Perhaps there was hope for him yet. "The obstacles, they were too easy for a trio of first years to get by. I mean, with the potions, why not fill all of the bottles with poison if you really wanted to stop Voldemort?"

“Exactly, Potter, Dumbledore wanted you to face off against Voldemort, to save the fake Philosopher’s Stone,” responded Daphne. “Here’s another one for you. Why would the Headmaster not notice a girl being possessed by a dark magical artifact?”

“Unless he had other motives in mind, he knew there was no way I could fail because my loyalty through that forced oath would call Fawkes and the Sorting Hat to help me,” said Harry but then something hit him. “Wait a minute, how did you know about...”

“It’s not my fault that you, Weasley, and Granger are foolish enough to talk without using anti-Eavesdropping spells,” said Daphne as she rolled her eyes slightly. “Not to mention the fact there were rumors about what happened and I learned enough to piece together exactly what happened.”

“Exactly how much of my life has Dumbledore been in control of?” asked Harry and Daphne just responded with a small shrug of her shoulders.

“That’s something for you to determine, I only know the rumors I heard about your exploits and even based on them, there are far too many coincidences for this not to be orchestrated,” said Daphne. One thing was for certain, Potter was beginning to force his way out from underneath the thumb of Dumbledore. “Now that you know what’s going on, you can take control of your own destiny and that might be for the best for everyone.”

“Why?” asked Harry as he looked at Daphne, this one word had caught her off guard. “What would you have to gain from it? You’ve told me very little, yet I’ve told you more than I should have. I still want to know why you were robbing Muggle homes. As much as you seem to know about pureblood society, I would think your family would be fairly well off.”

Daphne winced. Damn he was getting a bit too perceptive for her liking and she could not get away with tap dancing around the issue much longer.

"We were," commented Daphne briskly.

"Were?" prodded Harry. "In fact, wouldn't your parents wonder why you were gone the last day or so?"

"They have far more pressing issues to deal with," muttered Daphne as she sprang to her feet and held up her hand, pointing her wand, casting silencing charms and anti-Eavesdropping spells around the private room they were in. "The truth, Potter?"

"Everything, Greengrass," said Harry firmly. "I need to know everything. It's obvious you need my help for something, but I want to know what."

"Before I tell you this, I need you to promise me that you don't tell anyone anything that I tell you until I give you my permission otherwise," said Daphne slowly and Harry just nodded, wondering if he was going to regret making this promise. "And I mean everyone Potter, including Granger and Weasley."

"I swear on my magic that I won't tell anyone what you tell me, unless it's a life or death emergency," said Harry and Daphne took a deep breath, before she prepared to tell Harry.

"My father blew our entire family fortune in some faulty investments and borrowed money from some of the Inner Circle Death Eaters with no way to pay them back," said Daphne in a shaky voice, her confident and smug demeanor broken for the first time. "My parents and sister are being held hostage, I was too, but I cut a deal with them. If I found some way to pay them back before the end of the summer, they would go free. If I don't, they'll be killed."

"You mean you cut a deal with Death Eaters and expect them to honor it?" asked Harry and Daphne nodded. "And you call me, naïve? Even I know that's a stupid idea!"

"I didn't have a choice!" snapped Daphne angrily, who struggled to not break down completely in front of Potter. "They would have slaughtered us all like animals right away if I hadn't said anything, I



was the only one who wasn't knocked unconscious. As much as it pains me to say it, you're the only one that can help me."

"Where are they being held?" asked Harry calmly.

"Malfoy Manor," concluded Daphne in a dismal voice.

And that's the third chapter, ending at that note. I think the next chapter is best described by four words. Shit. Hits. The. Fan.

## Chapter Four: Manipulating the Odds:

Harry remained silent for about a minute after Daphne had told him where her family was being kept. Obviously there were questions running through his mind, as he realized he knew very little about Malfoy Manor. In fact, all he knew was the bragging that Draco Malfoy made at Hogwarts, about how many rooms was inside the Manor and how the Burrow could fit into his bedroom, with room left over. If anything else, it appeared to be a vast place and would likely be secured with a great deal of powerful spells. As far as he knew, Lucius was still in Azkaban, but he would not put it past the Death Eater to cut another deal. He had before to stay out of Azkaban, while claiming the Imperius Curse.

“Potter?” asked Daphne tentatively, interrupting his thoughts and he turned to her.

“I suppose I have no choice to help you,” said Harry slowly as he thought and then it came to him, a possible solution coming to him. “But first I need to have a word with someone I know, about the layout of Malfoy Manor and any nasty surprises that might be waiting.”

Daphne opened her mouth to ask who he could know that would have known anything about Malfoy Manor and suddenly a small pop echoed throughout the private room.

“Ah, hello, Dobby, I was just thinking about finding a way to contact you,” said Harry lightly as Daphne looked at Harry like he had grown two heads. His big plan to get inside Malfoy Manor was a blasted house self.

“Dobby knows Harry Potter sir, and Dobby will do anything to help for Harry Potter is the one who freed Dobby from his old Masters,” said Dobby happily and Daphne was biting her lip, trying not to say anything. The fact that this house elf was happy to be freed proved he was touched in the head. It was in their nature to be enslaved just like vampires to drink blood, werewolves to transform into brutish monsters on the full moon, and trolls to have a deplorable sense of hygiene but suddenly the name Dobby clicked her head. She knew

he once belonged to the Malfoys and could understand now why he was pleased to be freed. In fact, if she remembered correctly, this was the house elf that blasted Lucius Malfoy down a flight of stairs or at least that was the rumor. That gave her a small amount of amusement.

“Dobby, Daphne’s family is being held at the home of your old Masters, I was wondering if you would know any way to get into Malfoy Manor,” responded Harry and Dobby looked uncertain for a moment.

“Dobby’s old master changes the magic around his house once in a while, to prevent anyone from figuring out a way to break in but Dobby will check to see what he would do to help,” said Dobby as he disappeared with a pop. Daphne and Harry sat in silence for a few seconds and Dobby reappeared with a crestfallen look on his face. “Dobby is sorry, Harry Potter, sir, but Dobby’s old master has changed the magical wards around the Manor. It’s very different to what Dobby is remembering. Dobby is sorry he can’t do more but too much has changed.”

“Well that’s just great,” muttered Daphne in a sarcastic tone of voice but Harry shot her a sharp look that indicated that he was getting near the end of his patience and Daphne tried to keep her tongue. It was in her nature to be blunt but the last thing she needed was a Gryffindor hissy fit.

“That’s alright Dobby, I’m sure we’ll manage well, but thank you for trying,” said Harry and a look of realization appeared on Dobby’s face as if he had just thought of something that he had not previously done so.

“If Dobby may make a suggestion, there is no way that Malfoy Manor would deny Harry Potter, sir,” said Dobby and Harry looked at him with an eyebrow raised. “Dobby heard Professor Dumbledore telling Professor Snape that Harry Potter must not be knowing that he had been named the Head of the Black Family This was a couple days after Hogwarts is being let out and Dobby tried to get to Harry Potter to tell him, but there was wards there that was not allowing

Dobby in, that were not there when Dobby was meeting Harry Potter before his second year and thus Dobby could not get in."

"Why am I not surprised?" muttered Harry, obviously there was too much of a risk of Dobby discovering something and warning Harry about it because of his loyalty to Harry. "Still, why would Malfoy Manor not deny me just because of being the Head of the Black Family?"

"It is because of the marriage agreement that ex-Master Lucius was signing to marry ex-Mistress Narcissa, Master Lucius not be reading the fine print, even when Dobby was warning him of it, sir, Dobby had never been punished so thoroughly because of that day, all Lucius was worried about was the gold he would receive because of the arrangement," said Dobby. "Still the agreement states that Malfoy Manor has to be letting the Black Head make regular checks to make sure the terms marriage agreement was honored, sir."

"I see, well this should be an appropriate time to make sure that Lucius has been following that agreement," said Daphne with a slight triumphant smile.

"Yes, and if we happen to rescue your family why we pop in for a visit, so much the better," said Harry and Daphne responded with a nod, but Harry's face contorted into a frown. "The problem is, we don't know how many Death Eaters we'll have to deal with."

"Well, yes, that could be a problem, but I would think the idea would be to get my mother and sister out of there safely, without the needless heroics," responded Daphne coolly and if Harry had noticed the omission of her father, he was not saying anything. The truth was he had gotten them into this mess by his careless spending and then making a deal with those Death Eaters. Daphne also heard him attempting to get the Death Eaters to waive the debt, in exchange for giving them her and Astoria to do whatever they pleased but thankfully the Death Eaters were not in the mood to listen to bargaining from someone at that particular point. She did not tell Potter this, because she did not want his sympathy. "You do have a plan, right?"

“I’m working on one,” said Harry shortly, but he just had this feeling in the back of his mind that there was something that Daphne was not telling him and they may have less time than was indicated. “We need to try to catch them by surprise, early in the morning.”

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Now, Albus Dumbledore was beginning to get worried. Just a little bit but still, his concern was mounting by the fact that he had approximately six and a half hours, give or take a few minutes, before the blood protections around the Dursleys place faded. Of course, they would be useless if he could not get the Dursleys out of Gringotts custody, which was not happening so far. He sent a couple members of the Order to investigate, while swearing them to secrecy and the goblins ejected them from the bank, saying that if Dumbledore wanted to get his pet Muggles, he could come get them himself. Albus Dumbledore was many things, but stupid was not one of them. He knew precisely what would happen the moment he stepped inside that bank. The goblins would attack him and while he was confident that he might be able to hold them off long enough, it did not fit his plans to be the straw that broke goblin-human relations completely and kick started yet another goblin rebellion. The world had seen enough of those, as anyone who managed to stay awake during History of Magic could tell you.

Severus was getting back from a meeting with Lord Voldemort within the next few minutes and Dumbledore hoped he would have some insight that could point him in the right direction. Moody had relayed another theory, that a Death Eater could have put a Muggle or Muggles under the Imperius Curse and had them kidnap Potter. Sadly, that was one thing that Dumbledore could not account for and if that was true, then the boy would be in danger. Unfortunately, it was becoming more and more likely that the boy had managed to run off somehow, but how was the question? He had no one outside of the carefully monitored circle of friends. They were all loyal to Harry and never willingly betray them, but they would never go against Dumbledore’s opinion to such a glaring degree either.

As if right on cue, Severus appeared, looking like he had been through hell as he walked forward and sat down.

"Anything on Harry, Severus?" asked Dumbledore promptly, before his Potions Professor could even have a chance to catch his breath.

"No nothing on that brat, the Dark Lord is in a foul mood and I would think he would be a bit more joyous if he managed to capture Potter," said Snape in an agitated tone of voice. "He did manage to capture the Longbottom boy, killed Augusta Longbottom if what Bellatrix is saying is true. He thinks the boy knows something about what Potter is up too..."

"Up too?" asked Dumbledore in confusion.

"The fact that six teenagers managed to beat twelve Inner Circle Death Eaters has gotten the Dark Lord paranoid that Potter might be more powerful and influential than he had ever thought," said Snape. "I tried telling him the boy's triumphs were based on nothing but sheer dumb luck and circumstances and I was subjected to the Cruciatus for that. If I didn't know any better, I would say that the Dark Lord is scared of Potter."

"Hmm," stated Dumbledore, perhaps Voldemort's ill fated possession attempt at the Department of Mysteries had more of a psychological effect on him than possible.

"The Weasleys already had been attacked, the Granger girl has been removed, and Longbottom has been captured, what of the Lovegood girl?" asked Snape.

"She's out of the country with her father," commented Dumbledore who had made it business to keep tabs on anyone who he knew had been in even the most remote contact with Harry, to ensure that they were not a threat.

"It's just as well, the Dark Lord has not planned to move beyond the borders of this country yet, other than the few followers he has abroad," said Snape calmly and Dumbledore responded with a nod of his head. "But, he knows nothing of Potter, in fact, word has not gotten out that Potter has been missing as of yet. If you ask me, the brat decided to run off in a fit of childish rebellion..."

"Perhaps Severus," said Dumbledore calmly. "The fact remains is that if Voldemort does not have him, we need to find him immediately for his own protection. The time is running out and I'm afraid we will have to let the other members of the Order in on this entire situation, as time is running out and we need more eyes and ears out there."

Snape just nodded. He would sooner leave Potter out there to perish. It would serve the boy right because of his arrogance. Still, he had no choice but to go along with Dumbledore's plans, even if it was very grudgingly.

Dumbledore got to his feet, to make the necessary arrangements to contact the Order, to get them to Headquarters, relaying that the meeting is of the utmost urgency. At first, he thought he could retake control of the situation, but now as the seconds ticked down to the moment where the blood protections and by extension everything else had collapsed. Harry had to be brought into some form of protection for his own good, he would be unable to adequately handle the power and influence that he had the potential to wield.

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Given it was well after midnight, into the early hours of the morning, many of the members of the Order of the Phoenix were a bit surly after being called out of bed. They sat around the table at Number Four Privet Drive.

"This had better be good, Dumbledore made me miss a lucrative business opportunity," grumbled Mundungus Fletcher, as he sat down at the table, arms crossed but he stopped when he saw Molly Weasley walking into the kitchen, followed by many others. Snape was the second to last to arrive, along with Albus Dumbledore, who had a crystal in his hand, slightly concealed in the sleeve of his robe, that he was monitoring, looking at every few seconds with some hope, before he straightened up and sat himself down at the table, to a point where he could see everyone.

"I do apologize for calling you all here on such short notice, but there is a matter of utmost urgency that I need to speak to you about," said

Dumbledore as he took a deep breath. "It has come to my notice that Harry has either left or been removed from the house of his relatives, before the protections around there had been completely recharged and he may have visited Gringotts..."

"I though you said that Harry was safe, Albus!" shouted Molly in an accusing voice and Dumbledore just paused, there was no easy way to do this. It was a good idea that Remus was on a mission for him, otherwise this might be a bit more difficult than it was at this particular point in time when dealing with Molly Weasley.

"I believe he still may be, there is nothing to indicate that he has been captured by Lord Voldemort or any of his followers, but the fact remains that he has not been at his relatives' home for over a day and a half now," said Dumbledore before he quickly continued to speak. "Now is not the time to plan accusations for Harry, we need to keep an eye out for him at any places where he might be. It is quite possible that he has visited Diagon Alley and Gringotts..."

"Which would explain a few things we talked about, Albus," said Molly through gritted teeth.

"Wouldn't he try to come here?" asked Tonks.

"I feel this place has too many bad memories for Potter given Sirius's recent passing, this would not be the first place he would think of going if he ran from his relatives," said Albus calmly. "The Burrow is another possibility, even though it had been essentially torched to the ground by Death Eaters but there have been no traces of anyone visiting it since the Death Eaters left after the damage had been done."

"I knew this was going to happen, Albus, from the moment you arranged that boy had been dropped off at the Dursleys," said McGonagall in an accusing voice. "You kept sending Mr. Potter back to those Muggles year after year, they resented it and he resented it, and finally something had to happen that caused him to flee and who knows where he ended up after that."



“There were precautions that required Harry to spend time there,” said Dumbledore evasively before he looked at the crystal in his hand briefly, as the people at the table were muttering, exchanging ideas. “Rest assured that it was a necessity, something that had to be done. I’m afraid we don’t have much time.”

“What do you mean we don’t have too much time?” asked Kingsley Shacklebolt. “Exactly how much time do we have?”

“Six hours, perhaps just a bit more, but not enough to make a significant different,” said Dumbledore slowly. “Then the blood protections based around the Dursley property, the reason why Mr. Potter has to return to the home of his relatives every year, will burn out and then Mr. Potter will be vulnerable.”

“He looks pretty vulnerable from what you’ve told us,” grumbled Molly under her breath. “He was supposed to be safe; I thought you had methods to keep an eye on him...”

“And rest assure I do, if Harry uses his wand, we’ll be able to use this to locate him,” said Dumbledore as he held up the crystal, tied into the tracking charm that he placed on Mr. Potter’s wand after the incident involving the faux Philosopher’s Stone

“Is this legal, Albus?” asked McGonagall in a disapproving tone of voice.

“Not against the law, but frowned upon, given the situation however, it was in Mr. Potter’s best interest to be tracked, to not fall into parties that might use and corrupt him,” said Dumbledore and most of everyone bought this explanation, at least for now but there were people with questions.

“What if Harry doesn’t use his wand?” asked Bill.

“A possibility, I admit that,” said Dumbledore grudgingly. “That is why we must have small teams scouring spots that Harry would likely be, while the others monitor the crystal. Time is of the essence, we have to locate Harry immediately.”

“Shouldn’t we contact the Ministry?” asked one of the newer members of the Order. “Surely they would be interested if Potter is missing and in possible danger.”

“Yeah they would be interested, but for all of the wrong reasons,” said Moody.

“Alastor is correct, Cornelius is holding onto any power that he can and he might be able to entice Harry with something in exchange for his help,” said Dumbledore as he quickly decided to speak again. “Yes, it’s unlikely that Harry would agree to help but in the most desperate times, we have to expect everything and anything. Constant vigilance, right Alastor?”

“Yes, but it might be a bit too late for that, Albus,” said Moody, who found it interesting that Dumbledore had neglected to inform the Order about the goblins taking a look at the Dursley property and snatching the Dursleys, while taking them into Gringotts custody. Moody heard horror stories about goblin prisons, especially considering humans. They checked in but hardly anyone checked out.

“There is always hope, even in the darkest of times,” said Dumbledore calmly, as he consulted the crystal, almost wishing it would blink and lead him to Harry. It was curious why Harry had not utilized his wand to perform magic, even if it was just a Lumos spell. It was almost like he knew it was there, but that was impossible and well masked as well. “Now, I have devised a plan and I believe if we work diligently we can locate Harry before the time runs out.”

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Daphne and Harry found themselves just at the gates outside of Malfoy. It was just as enormous as Harry had feared and they looked over the fences.

“Okay we here, now what,” said Daphne but Harry remained silent. “You said you had a plan.”

“I’m fine tuning it,” responded Harry in forced calm tone of voice. “Don’t touch the gates or the fence; they are equipped with sensory

spells to detect intruders. The last thing we want is a dozen Death Eaters with their wands at our throats immediately.”

“Yes, Potter, I would like to avoid that if all possible,” said Daphne but she wondered exactly they would get in if they could not touch the floors or the gates, but Harry was looking at everything closely. It was almost like he was studying the spells and trying to find a flaw with that, but that was absurd and nearly impossible without a wand. Sure, she knew Potter could do wandless magic but this pushed a bit beyond those boundaries of what was possible.

Of course if the rumors were true about Potter creating a corporeal Patronus that chased off a hundred Dementors at age thirteen, than she would have to come to the conclusion that the rules of magic and perhaps logic, did not apply to Harry Potter.

“So the gates and the fences trigger the alarms and I suppose there are sensors that prevent travel from Apparation and Portkeys or at the very least trigger an alarm when someone enters through that, then how do you suppose we get inside?” asked Daphne.

“Well they only go up just about a few centimeters above the fence, and it’s a tall fence mind you but I’ve gone higher,” said Harry with a self assured smile on his face as Daphne looked at him with a raised eyebrow, before he reached into a small duffel bag that he had been concealing, before he pulled out two broomsticks which caused Daphne’s eyes to widen.

“When did you get those Potter?” asked Daphne.

“When you were distracted by trying to figure out what books we should get so I wouldn’t be a naïve little twit,” said Harry with a triumphant smirk.

“I was wondering why you were so quiet for ten minutes,” muttered Daphne as she shook her head but secretly she was amused. Potter was a bit more resourceful than she previously thought. Just a little bit, not too much of course. “So I suppose you want us to fly up above the fence...”

“Exactly, nice to see you can follow along with the simplest of plans concocted by a Gryffindor,” said Harry. “I trust you can fly.”

“Of course I can fly!” snapped Daphne in an irritated tone of voice. “If Malfoy hadn’t bought his way onto the Quidditch Team, I would have been on the team as Seeker and wiping the field with your smug little arse.”

“I sincerely doubt that,” said Harry shortly. “Now, getting inside, we need to fly over the fence, follow my lead, this is one case where I know what I’m doing. But first, we need to arrange a meeting between some old friends.”

Harry pulled out his wand which caused Daphne to launch into a panic.

“Potter, I thought we established that Dumbledore put a tracking spell on your wand and you shouldn’t use it in case of an emergency, no less than You-Know-Who,” hissed Daphne under her breath but Harry just looked at her.

“If I use this spell, Dumbledore will track us to Malfoy Manor, and in his desperation, trigger the detection spells, bringing any Death Eaters out there, the Order of the Phoenix and the Death Eaters will be distracted with their fight with each other, leaving us enough to get inside and rescue your family, with minimal confrontation on our part” said Harry calmly and Daphne opened her mouth in shock, as she looked at Harry.

“That actually isn’t a bad plan at all, Potter,” said Daphne in awe. Perhaps there was a Slytherin mindset within Potter after all, trying to claw its way out.

“Get on the broomstick, and the minute the spell leaves my wand, bolt above the gates and into that cloud cover up there, as I do,” said Harry and Daphne just stiffly nodded, indicating to Harry that she knew what had to be done. As Harry was on his broomstick, he held out his wand and pointed it towards a tree behind him. “STUPEFY!”

The moment that spell was cast, two blurs shot high above Malfoy Manor and out of sight.

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"Harry has used his wand, a stunning spell," said Dumbledore as he turned to the team he had assembled, mostly Aurors. He had other, less skilled members of the Order, stake out locations where Harry might be located. "He's at Malfoy Manor."

"The brat got himself captured then," said Snape in an agitated voice which got him several sharp looks.

"Now is not the time to accuse, Severus, we need to find Mr. Potter in the next three and a half hours or everything will be lost," said Dumbledore. "Leave five minutes after us, in your uniform for your night job."

Snape nodded as the group of Aurors and Dumbledore quickly took a Portkey that Dumbledore created to Malfoy Manor.

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"Here they come," muttered Harry, as he saw a flash of light and Dumbledore and other members of the Order of the Phoenix arrived immediately. "And hit the detection charms, this plan couldn't have worked out any better."

"Good thing your instincts were right Potter," said Daphne lightly.

"They are about ninety nine percent of the time," said Harry.

"What about the one percent of the time that they aren't?" inquired Daphne.

"You really don't want to know," answered Harry, as he saw the members of the Order looking around, Dumbledore casting spells to determine why they could not get inside. It appeared his desperation to find Harry clouded his common sense.

"How do we get inside once the Death Eaters and the Order get into their little scuffle?" asked Daphne quickly.

"Front door," said Harry calmly and Daphne looked at him like he had grown two heads. "C'mon, no one expects someone to sneak in the front door that would really catch them by surprise."

"Point well taken," answered Daphne, as sure enough the front door opened, just as the Order forced the gates open and several Death Eaters exited the house, wands drawn.

"Fly inside, now," said Harry urgently and both of them bolted through, as the spells began flying outside but before the front door was completely closed. The door just shut behind them as they made it inside Malfoy Manor.

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"Blocked out," said Dumbledore in a downtrodden voice outside of the gate. "Back up all of you, I need to figure out what we're dealing with."

"I think what we're dealing with is a couple dozen Death Eaters that know we stopped by," said Moody. "Albus, you should have Portkeyed outside of the gate, its obvious this place has detection charms."

The gates flew open as the Death Eaters walked forward. Dumbledore held his hand up, telling the members of the Order to stand down, unless they were provoked by an attack. One of the Death Eaters stepped forward, an arrogant walk that could be recognized anywhere.

"Lucius, I must say this is a surprise," said Dumbledore with forced calmness but he knew he was running out of time. If Harry was not retrieved soon, things would get very bad and there was the matter of figuring out a way to get the Dursleys from Gringotts, something that Dumbledore had been mentally working on in the back of his mind. "I was under the impression you were a guest of Azkaban prison."

“Yes, well it wouldn’t be the first time you had a misconception, Dumbledore,” said Lucius as the Death Eaters stood, hands around their wands, ready to fight at the first sign of an attack. “I do wonder why you would be foolish enough to arrive at a location that is under the direction protection of the Dark Lord.”

“Lucius, I know you’re an intelligent man and have a very long memory, so I would ask you not to insult my intelligence,” said Dumbledore. “We know you have just captured Harry Potter, he attempted to use a stunning spell but obviously, he was unable to fight you off.”

“Potter we don’t...okay Dumbledore you found us out, we captured Potter,” said Lucius with a smug smirk, as a fight would give them the opportunity to wipe out several members of the Order of the Phoenix. “I suppose this is the point where you ask us to step aside so you can collect your little Chosen One.”

“Yes, Lucius and I believe we are at the point where you refuse to do so,” said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye.

“Yes and this is the part where Bella kills all the blood traitors and Mudbloods for disturbing her beauty sleep,” said Bellatrix as she bounced up and down on her heels like a hyperactive child before her eyes widened in realization and she pointed her wand right at Dumbledore before anyone else had a chance to do anything. “AVADA KEDAVRA!”

Sadly her spell missed, by the fact that Dumbledore was not standing there where it hit. That one attack triggered a full fledged battle between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix.

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Daphne and Harry made their way inside of Malfoy Manor, as the sounds of battle erupted from outside. The Order and the Death Eaters were locked into battle.

“Where are they held?” asked Harry.

“Unless they were moved, third floor, fourth corridor to the right from the stairs, ninth door,” said Daphne, who hoped she had remembered those directions right but was pretty sure she did. They moved up the stairs, trying not to attract any attention. It seemed once they were inside, there was very little in the way of additional security.

“Just hold it right there,” demanded a voice and Daphne and Harry turned around, coming face to face with an entire group of Death Eaters, all of which who had their wands drawn.

“Figures they would not bring everyone outside,” muttered Harry as he and Daphne held their wands.

“Drop your wands and come quietly or we’ll kill you,” said the Death Eater facing off against him roughly.

“I choose neither,” said Harry, as he blocked a spell that came his way, before he sent the offending Death Eater flying into a suit of armor. The wizard screamed as the back of his neck impaled the battle axe the suit was holding, blood splattering down to the ground.

“Thought we were going to avoid this,” said Daphne as she maneuvered around, manipulating the attacks of her adversaries back against them, offering little of the way of resistance until she was in position to hurl one of the Death Eaters down a flight of stairs.

“Well what did you expect them to do when they found us?” said Harry in a bit of a sarcastic tone. “Invite us in for tea and crumpets?”

The battle continued, with the ranks of the Death Eaters thinned. Harry was maneuvered underneath a rickety part of the hallway, as Daphne blasted one of the Death Eaters in the chest. Harry did not recognize the spell but it looked to be quite effective, as the Death Eater was on the ground, unconscious. Two Death Eaters stood on either side of him.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” shouted two Death Eaters, but Harry dodged both of the spells, causing them to collide with each other in mid air.



A magical explosion as both of the spells collided each other and around Harry and the Death Eaters, the ceiling collapsed around them, caving in right on top of them, with Harry nudging her just out of harm's way, before she could be caught in the collapse.

"Harry!" shouted Daphne a horrified voice as she looked at the huge pile of rubble around the area where Harry was dueling. There was no way anyone could have survived that, even with magic, but she had to try, even though she could only begin to think what grisly remains she would find under there but she dug through the pile. She saw arms and legs, but nothing belonging to Harry. "No, after all of that, you can't be dead, not like this, damn you Harry Potter, I need you for this..."

"It is nice to be needed," said a cool voice and Harry was standing right there behind her, looking a bit shaken but otherwise okay. He saw a brief flicker of a relieved look on Daphne's face. "It sounds to me like you were worried, Miss Greengrass."

"As if," scoffed Daphne in an agitated tone of voice. What was it about Potter that made her so close to letting her guard down? "If I was worried, it was because of your inconceivable luck had ran out at the worst possible time, when I still needed to rescue them. That would be the only reason I was worried. "

"I managed to slip through a door off to the side and come around the other way, in case you were wondering," said Harry. "The Death Eaters that caused the explosion, not so lucky. Crushed to death."

"Good," said Daphne savagely.

"I thought you might want to know that I found a shortcut up to where you believe your family is being held," said Harry and Daphne looked on with interest. "No time to explain, just follow me, before any more Death Eaters decide to stop by to say hi."

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The battle continued outside, with the members of the Order of the Phoenix losing rather badly. Dumbledore managed to do okay for the

simple fact that he was Dumbledore and Moody was still fighting despite his wooden leg being blown to splinters. The others had managed to hold their own just barely and some had been knocked unconscious. It was a miracle that none were dead.

“Yaxley,” grumbled Moody as he looked at the Death Eater who had been hanging from a tree. “Been wanting to tangle with you ever since you cursed my leg causing me to wear this wooden rubbish.”

“I’ll remove your other leg Moody, once I get free,” grumbled Yaxley but Moody vanished the branches the Death Eater was hanging on, causing him to spiral to the ground, landing with a loud thud. Meanwhile, Tonks had managed to disable one of the Death Eaters, but Bellatrix faced off against her.

“Why if it isn’t the brat of the Mudblood and my blood traitor sister!” cried Bellatrix with glee, as Tonks threw a stunning spell but Bellatrix casually deflected the attack. “I’ve wanted to play with you for quite some time. CRUCIO!”

Tonks screamed in agony, as Bellatrix had put the Cruciatus Curse on her but Bellatrix was quickly deterred from her fun, by Dumbledore coming back behind her. Bellatrix blocked enough of Dumbledore’s attack but she was still winded, the breath knocked completely out of her. Moody took out two more Death Eaters at once.

“You foolish old man, I’ll remove that twinkle from your eye!” shouted Bellatrix, as she sent a spell at Dumbledore’s heart but Dumbledore blocked it and returned fire. Tonks managed to catch Bellatrix from behind with a spell as she was distracted fighting Dumbledore.

“I do thank you for your assistance, Nymphadora,” said Dumbledore and Tonks shot Dumbledore a nasty glare for using her first name, but he paid her no mind, proceeded to duel three Death Eaters at once, a bit more frantically as time was ticking down and he needed to get Harry, not to mention the Dursleys.

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Neville Longbottom sat in the cell, wincing at the headache he received from Snape assaulting his mind earlier. He had better days and it was a wonder he had held onto his sanity. His eyes looked glazed over as he looked over at his cellmate. A girl a few years younger than he was, she had barely spoken since they had been here, but Neville recognized her as a Slytherin third year, Astoria Greengrass. Her older sister was in Neville's year, in Slytherin.

A loud crash echoed in the hallway outside.

"What in the hell was that?" rasped Neville, more to himself and the girl looked up, with a bit of an irritated glance in her eyes.

"Perhaps it's Harry Potter, here to save us all," said Astoria in a sarcastic but weakened voice, but the door burst open.

"Neville, what are you doing here?" asked Harry in surprise.

"Harry, is that you?" asked Neville in a surprised voice.

"Yes it is," responded Harry. "You didn't answer my question, though. What are you doing here?"

"Death Eaters attacked my home yesterday, killed my grandmother, captured me thinking I knew something about you and no Harry, none of this is your fault," said Neville quickly as Daphne walked forward causing Astoria's eyes to widen.

"I thought you weren't coming back," said Astoria. "Since you got yourself out of here safely."

"You really thought I would abandon you," responded Daphne calmly.

"Well yes, you are a Slytherin," said Astoria as she looked at her. "But was he the best you could bring to help you?"

"You know he is, would you trust Dumbledore or the Ministry?" questioned Daphne and Astoria shook her head.

"Still, him, I mean he's Dumbledore's golden boy," stated Astoria.

“Not anymore,” said Harry roughly and Astoria and Neville both had confused looks on their face. “I’ll explain later once we get to a safe place.”

“Where is Mother?” asked Daphne to her sister.

“I don’t know, they took her and Father a couple of days after you managed to talk your way out of here, Lucius Malfoy mentioned the only reason why I was not removed as he planned to give me to Draco as a birthday present,” said Astoria who looked sickened by the very thought and Daphne looked positively murderous as well. “All I know is they’re not here, where they were taken or if they’re still alive...I don’t know.”

“He never planned to let any of you free,” said Harry calmly, as he handed Neville and Astoria wands that he had managed to get off of a pair of knocked out Death Eaters. “Use these if necessary but I prefer not to fight, we need to get out of here now.”

Without another word, they moved forward, past the Death Eater guards that had been knocked unconscious but as they moved forward, the hallway got cold, as they were surrounded by mist.

“Perfect!” snapped Harry sarcastically as a small group of Dementors moved towards them, mist rising up above the hallway. “All of you get out of here, now!”

“But Harry...” stated Neville.

“NOW!” shouted Harry firmly. “I’ll catch up.”

“Are you sure about this, Potter?” asked Daphne in an uncertain voice and Harry just shot her a glare. “He’s sure, move it while we still can.”

Unfortunately the Dementors had moved forward before they could get away forcing Harry to react. He thought of a world where Dumbledore and Voldemort were both dead and out of his life that seemed to be a happy enough thought.

“EXPECT PATRONUM!” shouted Harry as the Patronus erupted from his wand. It was the same silver stag as usual but for some reason, it felt more powerful. It moved down the hallway. The next thing that happened was something that Harry could not have foreseen happening in a million years.

The Patronus ran down the Dementors. Each of the foul creatures dropped to the ground, as if they were knocked unconscious. The group behind Harry looked shocked as none of the after effects of the Dementors were present.

“Okay, what just happened?” asked Daphne, mouth wide open.

“No time for explanations, let’s move it,” said Harry, as he saw a glance of the battle outside, it looked like the Order of the Phoenix had won, which meant they would be coming inside soon enough. The group moved forward, reaching the short cut that Harry and Daphne had come before they made their way down the stairs, where they came face to face with a Death Eater. There was no mistaking who was underneath the mask given the condensing glare he was giving Harry.

“Potter!” shouted Snape but this only caused Potter to raise his wand. “You foolish brat, I’m on your side, you need to get out of here before the Dark Lord...”

“STUPEFY!” shouted Harry, catching Snape off guard and knocking him off, before Harry added in a whisper. “Sorry, Professor, don’t want to blow your cover in case anyone was watching.”

“Front door’s open, let’s go now,” said Daphne as she looked on the outside, but the members of the Order of the Phoenix were just walking in the front door.

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“I believe that is all of them,” said Dumbledore in a tired but pleased voice. He still had time, but he needed to get inside Malfoy Manor.

“Malfoy checked out before we could nab him,” grumbled Moody and Dumbledore just responded with a slight shrug, as all of the Death Eaters, were tied up and secured.

“We’ll get him next time, Alastor,” said Dumbledore. “Time is of the essence. Kingsley, Nymphadora, drop this package outside the Ministry.”

The two Aurors nodded as Dumbledore lead the remaining members of the Aurors inside where they heard a voice stating “The front door’s open, let’s go.”

Dumbledore and the others walked inside and he spotted Harry inside, leading a group of four outside. With Harry were Neville Longbottom, Astoria Greengrass, and Daphne Greengrass.

Harry saw them and remembered the location of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place. As the owner of the house, he could override the Fidelius Charm or at least that’s what the goblins had told him. He quickly grabbed on to the others before the he Apparated them before Dumbledore had a chance to catch his breath from the battle.

“When did the boy learn how to Apparate?” asked one of the members of the Order.

“That’s an intriguing question,” said Dumbledore, but he was able to track Harry. “His destination is Headquarters. Alastor, collect Severus and let us follow Harry, we will be able to speak to him and get him to return to his relatives them.”

Moody just shrugged, he would sooner leave Snape to rot but he had a job to do. The members of the Order of the Phoenix disappeared back to the house. They moved inside where Harry, Daphne, Astoria, and Neville were waiting. Dumbledore took a few seconds to put on his best kindly grandfather expression.

“Ah Harry, I must admit you gave me quite a bit of worry....” Stated Dumbledore but Harry cut him off immediately.

“I, Harry James Potter, Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Black, order a complete lockdown of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place,” said Harry and a flash of magic appeared around the house and Dumbledore looked completely frantic. A complete lockdown of a family property lasted for eight hours and no one gets in or out. Once put into place, a lockdown could not be stopped at all.

To put things in perspective, they had just over two hours before Harry had to be returned.

“Harry, do you realize what you just have done?” asked Dumbledore.

“On the contrary, Headmaster, I know exactly what I’ve done,” responded Harry. “And more importantly exactly what you’ve done.”

The end of another chapter and it was a long one. There was a bit of stuff shifted over to the next chapter, so not as much shit hit the fan as I would have liked but still the ball is in motion for things to come.

## Chapter Five: Cutting the Strings:

“Harry, I’m afraid you must have been misguided,” said Dumbledore and here he looked at Daphne, as if it was somehow her fault but she just smirked at the Headmaster, sitting back and enjoying the show. “I thought we had come to an understanding about your placement at your relatives...”

“No, you came to an understanding, I just went along with it, because of the fact you coerced me into agreeing with a loyalty oath,” said Harry in a calm voice, as he looked at Dumbledore, who held his wand but found nothing came out of it. “You see, the goblins might be blood thirsty bastards most of the time but you’d be surprised what information they might part with. Especially if this information hurts the interests of a human they might hate. Hence the lockdown, the goblin waiting on me mentioned this and some other things. One thing that might not be common knowledge about this particular property is there are charms placed around it that restrict magical use by anyone but the Head of the House. Don’t ask me how this is possible, it’s one of those quirky things with magic. Still, only I can use magic or give permission to others too use it for the next eight hours.”

At that point, Dumbledore opened his mouth to suggest that Harry would give him permission. The oath would make him comply but suddenly, Dumbledore found that he had no voice to vocalize that suggestion. He looked around for help but since the others could not use magic either, Dumbledore was basically on his own as Harry sat there, right across from Dumbledore.

“Now, Headmaster, I hold all of the cards in this situation,” said Harry with a slight smug look and Dumbledore just looked at Harry with a disapproving look, which was all he could do for the next eight hours. “I do admit you nearly got away with it, Professor. You nearly tricked a teenage boy who knows very little about how the Wizarding World works. Good for you, Professor, good for you, shows why you’re the greatest wizard who ever lived. Of course if you spent as much time using your influence to remove corruption from the Ministry of Magic as you tried to keep me in the dark and under control, we might not



have the problems we're having with Voldemort and his not so merry men. But I suppose that would be too much to ask."

Harry paused, taking a deep breath and Dumbledore sat there. Even his magic could not break the protections of the lockdown.

"So here's the deal Professor, I'm going to let you present your side of the story, more than Sirius was offered, and don't give me that look, you could have gotten him a trial, they convicted him without one mostly on your word to begin with," said Harry as he looked at Dumbledore, who continued to look disapproving. "I've learned a lot over the last day, and there's more to come, I haven't had a chance to completely read the information the goblins have given me. Only what they pointed out, which funnily enough is information that can really hurt you, Professor."

Dumbledore sat there. His attempts to deceive the goblins all those years ago had come back to haunt him. It was a necessity but the goblins took any level of deception very badly and had extremely long memories."

"Here's the deal, Dumbledore, I'll give you back your ability to talk, providing you agree to the following conditions," said Harry and Dumbledore looked back, he had no choice. "You will agree not to manipulate me or any people who are my guests of this house for the next twenty four hours. You will not modify memories, try to get them sent to Azkaban, or hurt them in any way whatsoever. And you don't try and ask for your magic back. In return, I won't invite the goblins over here for tea and your head. Swear on your magic that you'll agree to these terms."

Dumbledore looked around, pointing towards his throat.

"Oh, you want a drink, very well then," said Harry as he conjured a glass before filling it with water and passed it to Dumbledore, who shook his head. "Don't worry, I didn't poison it, as tempting as that sounds."

Dumbledore kept pointing at his mouth.

“Tooth ache, Dumbledore?” asked Harry. “Boy those suck, don’t they? Especially when your relatives are forced to take you to the dentist and are too cheap to pay for Novocain that can be a real bitch. Of course, that’s one of my less painful memories from my time with my charming relatives. Still, not too pleasant, not at all. I trust you have potions to deal with that sort of thing.”

“Potter, I think Dumbledore wants his voice back,” whispered Daphne but she had an extremely amused look on her face and several members of the Order stood back, shooting glares at Harry, except for Moody, who looked like he was enjoying the show. It served Dumbledore right for not showing Constant Vigilance and stopping Potter before he started the lockdown.

“Really, then why didn’t he say so?” asked Harry and Dumbledore just glared at him. “Oh, that’s right, silencing charm. Still, I don’t want to remove that charm just let, gives Dumbledore too much of a chance to twist my words around. Therefore, nod your head if you agree to the terms that I gave you a couple of minutes ago.”

Dumbledore looked at him with a quizzical look on his face, as if trying to convey to Harry a question some sort.

“Oh, what happens if you don’t agree, you say?” asked Harry and Dumbledore looked at Harry, as if motioning for him to go on. “Well, I keep calling lockdown after lockdown, until you do, keeping people inside in and people on the outside out, until they get miserable and angry and want to kill you with their bare hands for being a stubborn old man.”

Harry paused, giving it seconds for that statement to sink in Dumbledore’s memory.

“So, Professor Dumbledore, I ask you, do you agree to the terms I have given you?” questioned Harry and Dumbledore paused but he had no choice. He would have to gain control of this situation later on once he figured out how much Harry knew. Slowly, he nodded and Harry waved his wand, removing the charm, as Dumbledore found his voice returning to him.

“Harry, might I ask what inspired this degree of distrust between us?” asked Dumbledore.

“The best place to start would be at the beginning, exactly how I lived it about two days ago,” stated Harry and Dumbledore nodded, waiting for Harry to go on. “It all started when I was in my room, lamenting how horrible my life was and how I was fighting a losing battle. Given the fact that I have to fight someone who has decades of magical experience more than me, I think I was feeling rather hopeless. The thing is, I came to some conclusions, that I would have been a lot better had I known what I needed to know five years ago, perhaps I wouldn’t have worked harder, to give myself more of a chance. Still, that was my choice not to work hard but the fact is, if I knew, maybe I would have had the information that I needed to make a more informed choice.”

“I gave you my reasoning Harry, I wanted you to have a childhood...” stated Dumbledore but that was the wrong thing.

“Yes, a childhood, I don’t know what world you live in, but how many children have to deal with crazed Dark Lords out to murder them or basilisks or Dementors or getting their names placed into tournaments designed for people three years older than them?” asked Harry coolly and for this, Dumbledore had no response, so Harry decided to strike while the iron was hot. He had this rant in him. “A childhood where I was placed with the Dursleys, even the worst treated house elf was treated better than I was but you know what pisses me off the most? The fact that there were laws in place against you placing me there.”

“Harry, you had to be placed there for your own protection, I had no choice,” said Dumbledore in protest.

“There’s always a choice,” said Harry. “As someone once told me, there is a difference between doing what is right and what is easy and you, Professor Dumbledore, chose to do what was easy.”

Dumbledore looked completely flabbergasted at his own words that he had said to Harry years ago, being thrown up in his face.

“But enough about the distant past, plans have been made to rectify any problems,” said Harry as he paused. “Back to how we got here, I was in my room when I heard a noise. Someone had broken into my prison at Number Four Privet Drive. It was odd, as I was under the impression that as long as I stayed there, there could be no harm brought to me, unless of course it was the people in the house.”

“Surely things could have not been that bad,” said one of the members of the Order in a skeptical voice.

“Trust me, they were, but we’re getting off the subject,” said Harry as he took a breath before he steered the conversation back towards its intended destination. “Anyway, I was in my room when I heard a disturbance and someone had decided to borrow a few items. The problem is, the Dursleys have the worst taste possible and nothing they have is worth any value, even if it does look like that to an untrained eye. The intriguing part about this story is that the intruder was unaware that I had even lived there. It was a one in a million fluke that she even showed up but funnily enough, my entire life is filled with the most convoluted coincidences possible. But I digress; we had a little confrontation and exchanged some words. I managed to get the better of the situation and restrain the intruder, unmasking her to reveal Greengrass here. She was none too pleased by the fact that I utterly embarrassed her. Words were exchanged and I might have conveyed the fact that I was not that pleased to be at the Dursleys. To make a long story short, I freed her and she assisted me in leaving. I guess you have some way to detect whether or not I leave the property.”

“That would be correct Harry,” said Dumbledore. “Unfortunately, I was unable to notice you had been coerced into leaving the safety of your home for several hours and thus were unable to take the necessary steps to do so and...”

“I wasn’t coerced, coercion is using an loyalty oath to turn someone into your puppet without a chance for them to refuse it, by returning there every year for a certain amount of time, I reinforced your little oath according to the goblins, Headmaster, that was underhanded and my hat’s off to you for that,” said Harry. “Or it would be if I was wearing a hat.”

"Besides, I didn't twist Potter's arm, he chose to come with me," replied Daphne in an agitated tone of voice as she looked at Dumbledore with slight contempt etched on her face. "Smartest thing he had ever done in my opinion but he's a bit more resourceful than I could imagine. Still, getting away from that dump, I wouldn't live there if you paid me every Galleon Potter owned."

"That bad?" asked Astoria, speaking for the first time.

"Yes, it was extremely horrible, the room that Potter lived in was just barely bigger than a broom cupboard," said Daphne. "Which was a step up, considering that's where he lived before..."

"And it was only because they were scared that people were watching the house, of course, someone would have to know I was being kept in a cupboard underneath the stairs if they put it on the envelope of my Hogwarts letter," said Harry, as he looked right towards Dumbledore with an accusing expression.

"I don't know what the laws in the Muggle world are, but in the Wizarding World, that level of abuse is illegal, Harry," said Neville seriously. "Especially with Muggles abusing their magical children, they can be punished by the Dementor's Kiss if convicted."

"Those Muggles will be wishing for the Dementor's Kiss by the time everything is all said and done," said Daphne with a smirk. "They're in goblin custody."

"Can't say I feel sorry for them," muttered Moody under his breath.

"Alastor, I'm sure Harry was exaggerating about his treatment," said Dumbledore in a disapproving voice.

"Actually I'm not," responded Harry. "Anyway, after I willingly joined Daphne on a trip to Gringotts, I found out some things that were kept to me. Like for instance, all the gold and properties inherited from the Black estate. Granted, by pureblood standards, it wasn't really too great, but it wasn't nothing to turn my nose up. And then, the fact I was the last living heir of Hogwarts threw me for a loop..."

“Harry, I’m afraid the goblins were mistaken about this,” said Dumbledore who hoped to put seeds of doubt in Harry’s mind before he took advantage of his rights and did something that would not be in Dumbledore’s best interests. “My research has indicated that Tom was the last heir of Hogwarts, being the heir of Salazar Slytherin...”

“True until fifteen years ago, but when Riddle failed to kill me, all of the powers and rights of the Heir of Salazar Slytherin were transferred to me, which I know you know, given that a ward to keep those powers under check,” said Harry calmly and Dumbledore looked like he was going to say something, but he thought better of it. “I haven’t really had a chance to look into everything, but I know for a fact that given what happened last year, control of Hogwarts reverts back to me.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about Harry,” said Dumbledore but this was precisely the wrong thing to say in front of Harry.

“Dolores Umbridge, Dumbledore, you know ugly woman, looks like a toad, has a nastily annoying coughing ailment,” said Harry. “You allowed her into the school last year and breached the agreement made between the four Founders and the first Hogwarts Headmaster, one that you had to swear to before you’re allowed into that cushy little chair. One that you might have broken before last year. Would you care to enlighten everyone what that little oath is?”

“As the Hogwarts Head, I solemnly swear to protect the students of this school from any internal and external threats, and not allow anyone who will damage the best interests of the students of the school or the education they are entitled to,” said Dumbledore dismally and Harry looked at Dumbledore with a nod.

“Four times Professor Dumbledore, you have allowed a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher inside the school that have endangered the interests of the students in the school,” said Harry. “One had Lord Voldemort growing out of the back of his head, one was an overhyped pompous prick who used his teaching career as an excuse to sell books, another who was a Polyjuiced imposter of someone who was supposed to be one of your oldest friends, and

there's Umbridge, whose mere presence inside the school who doesn't need any explanation. Four out of five and I'm sure some people would make it five out of five, considering Lupin's monthly problem. That's a perfect record, Headmaster, unfortunately it's a bad perfect record. And I doubt I need to repeat the numerous times where I nearly lost my life, despite Hogwarts being the safest place on Earth. But back to Umbridge and the fact you allowed her inside the school..."

"Harry, you must understand, the Ministry of Magic forced my hand," said Dumbledore in a pleading voice, but he was getting annoyed very quickly. Albus Dumbledore detested people who manipulated others for their own gain and Harry was doing this to him due to some fit of teenage rebellion.

"The Ministry of Magic should have never been involved in Hogwarts in the first place, in fact, once the Board of Governors were established, certain people were overstepping the bounds set down by the Founders," said Harry. "And now I'm fixing the problem immediately. The Board of Governors are being disbanded but don't worry, Dumbledore. You'll still be the Headmaster. Granted you won't have any real power, but at least you'll still sit in that cushy chair and get paid the salary for doing the job. You'll be a figurehead who will answer to the owner of Hogwarts, as in me."

"You will find that the Ministry of Magic won't go for that Harry," said Dumbledore.

"The Ministry of Magic has no choice, unless they want a legal battle with me that will bankrupt this entire country for the crimes they committed against me and the crimes you admitted against me," said Harry. "The fact remains that I could leave this country right now and all of you would be, for lack of a better term, screwed. And would you like to share with the people why that would be, Headmaster?"

"I don't think that would be necessary, Harry," replied Dumbledore as he wondered where Harry had found this newfound streak of independence. He breathed a sigh of relief all those years ago when Harry was sorted into Gryffindor as opposed to Slytherin; there would

be more opportunities there for Harry to slip past Dumbledore's watchful eye.

"It is but that could be later, as I was saying before I got sidetracked explaining the blatantly obvious," said Harry as he took a deep breath. "After taking care of the necessary business at Gringotts, Daphne told me the circumstances that lead us to Malfoy Manor. It's her business to tell you but I'm pretty sure your pet Death Eater had already filled you in on the details of them being held there and you did nothing considering it would not fill your agenda."

"I did nothing about it, because I feel it would be foolish to provoke a fight with any Death Eaters who might be hiding out at the Manor," said Dumbledore. "You being held there...you were never captured, were you, Harry?"

"What gave you the idea that I was, Headmaster?" asked Harry with an innocent look that really fooled no one.

"Lucius Malfoy gave us the impression that you had been captured and we acted accordingly," said Dumbledore calmly. "I see Lucius Malfoy was lying..."

"You don't say," interrupted Harry dryly. "Naturally Lucius was lying, it would make him more powerful than he really is if he caused you to assume that you had me. And you, not wanting to waste any more time verifying that, decided to attack the Death Eaters, because you needed to get me back to the alleged safety of my relatives. Exactly how many Death Eaters did you capture by the way?"

"I believe about thirty or so, we got some heavy hitters in there, sadly Malfoy slipped away, the little worm," supplied Moody.

"Well, he'll get his before long," stated Harry calmly. "So after making sure you came rushing in because your plans were failing spectacularly, we snuck into Malfoy Manor. Took out a few Death Eaters who lingered, managed to find a shortcut that got us up to the place and rescued Neville and Astoria. Thank you by the way for biding us enough time to do what needed to be done."



"You mean you manipulated us into doing your dirty work, Potter!" shouted a member of the Order and Dumbledore looked very disappointed.

"That was very low, Harry, using us as mere pawns to achieve your goals, people could have gotten hurt," said Dumbledore in a disapproving voice but Harry just ignored this look, in fact it angered him.

"Not my problem, they're adults, they chose to join the Order, they chose to follow you," said Harry in a bit of a heated voice. "If you told them to Bungee jump off of the Astronomy Tower without a cord, headfirst into concrete, they would do it without a question."

"Harry, there is no need to make this difficult, we are on the same side," said Dumbledore. "We need to trust each other."

"Funnily enough, you've never gave me one reason to trust you," replied Harry.

"I'm sorry you feel this way Harry, but you will find that it will be your best interests for us to work together, for everyone," said Dumbledore and Harry looked at him.

"I could have sworn that you were threatening me, Professor Dumbledore," said Harry in a cold voice and a few people shivered. "Let me make one thing perfectly clear to you. All it takes is a few words to the Ministry about an illegal vigilante group being formed and me being held hostage by you against my own will and dozens of people will go to Azkaban. And don't think I won't either."

"I would hope you wouldn't hurt as many people to get your own way, Mr. Potter," said Dumbledore in a disapproving voice. "Will you be willing to condemn that many people?"

"Yes, I will Dumbledore, because you were willing to condemn me," said Harry. "But you'll find, unlike some people around here, I'm a fair person. I take it you want to resume using this house for Order meetings."

"Yes, Harry, if you would," said Dumbledore tentatively, not wanting to endanger his chances.

"Three conditions Dumbledore, condition number one, any information you receive about Voldemort or his Death Eaters, will be passed onto me, without fail, without exception," said Harry.

"Why not just join the Order Harry, wouldn't that be much easier?" asked Dumbledore in his best kindly grandfather voice.

"That would give people the impression that I support the way you're handling this war," commented Harry icily. "I plan to handle this war my way considering I'm the one who is going to have to defeat Voldemort. But if you want to continue playing chess master, than by all means do so, but off my time and away from me."

"Very well Harry," said Dumbledore who resented how little Harry had thought of him. He had only been doing this in Harry's best interests. "What about the other two conditions?"

"Your pet Death Eater has been rather quiet for this entire meeting," said Harry as he looked over and realized for the first time that Snape was still stunned.

"I kept him stunned, Potter, figure there would be less headaches that way," replied Moody. "The ranting about how you're arrogant like your father does get a bit tiring after a while."

"You better believe it," said Harry in a tired voice. "Wake him up but please keep him restrained and gagged because I want to speak to him without his little commentary."

"Right, Potter," said Moody as he waved his wand and Snape's eyes flickered open. He looked disgusted but he was unable to move or speak. Harry walked forward, standing over Snape.

"Hello, Professor Snape, I'm sure Dumbledore will let you in on the finer details later, probably while attempting to find his way around the oath I had him swear under duress, but long story short, given the fact that certain agreements were breached last year, I'm now the

Ruler of Hogwarts,” said Harry. “Well technically I’m the owner but I feel ruler is a bit more in tune with someone of my arrogant nature. Wouldn’t you agree, Snape?”

“Professor Snape, Harry,” corrected Dumbledore in a robotic manner.

“Now, you can remain Potions Teacher, for now, but step one toenail out of line and I’ll smack you down to being Filch’s assistant so fast your head will spin,” said Harry coldly.

“Actually, Severus will not be the Potions Teacher this year, I had planned to...ask for your assistance in helping me to get an old colleague back to Hogwarts to teach Potions at Hogwarts and give Severus the Defense Against the Dark Arts position,” said Dumbledore.

“Well, don’t worry, Headmaster, because you won’t have to go to the trouble in manipulating someone to take a job at Hogwarts using my fame, because Severus here won’t be teaching Potions,” said Harry. “Umbridge was right that certain traditions need to remain in place and one of those traditions I just love is Snape getting screwed out of getting the job he really wants. Maybe if he didn’t use his classes an opportunity to bully me and others, I might be a bit nicer. But, I’m going to have to take a page out of the book of the book of Snape and be a petty jerk just because I’m holding a grudge against him.”

“Harry, we need a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and there is no one for the job other than Severus,” protested Dumbledore.

“What you couldn’t get a pet rock to do it on short notice?” asked Harry dryly. “Because that would be a step up from Lockhart.”

Harry paused.

“Besides, I’ve already got the perfect person to teach the class,” said Harry as he paused for dramatic effect. “Me.”

“Harry, you’re just a student,” protested Dumbledore.

"I figure because of the curse, if it even exists, the entire prophecy will invalidate it, and besides, that little group I formed last year, the Defense Association, I bet everyone got at least an Exceeds Expectation grade," said Harry.

"I can't dispute that, but there are rules that in place that a person can't be a teacher and a student simultaneously," said Dumbledore.

"Consider that rule revoked," commented Harry coolly.

"There is the matter of fitting in your classes around the demanding N.E.W.T. schedule," argued Dumbledore.

"Then get me a time turner, the Ministry has given them out for a lot less," said Harry.

"All of the time turners were destroyed during that battle of the Department of Mysteries," stated Dumbledore.

"Fine, I'll figure something out, but I'm the only person I want teaching this subject, I don't anyone from the Ministry or your pet Death Eater anywhere near this class," said Harry shortly. "And speaking of Snape..."

"Professor Snape, Harry" corrected Dumbledore in a manner that could only be completely automated.

"Snape, you better keep him on a leash around me and my friends," said Harry. "Or I will, and my leash has a choke chain on it and I will pull it if Snape gets out of line."

"Do you think you're being unfair about this Harry?" asked Dumbledore.

"No," said Harry bluntly. "I don't trust Snape and that's all that there is to it."

"Very well Harry, I wish you would be more trusting," said Dumbledore.

"You didn't trust me enough to give me the information I needed years ago and now it's up to me to figure out a way to dig myself out of this hole," said Harry. "You reap what you sow, Dumbledore."

He turned to Daphne, Astoria, and Neville.

"I'll show you all to your rooms, so you can get at least a few hours of sleep while you await the lockdown, I have a feeling I'm going to have to be explaining this all over again when it ends," said Harry as they nodded and Harry turned to the Order. "Once it ends, you can see yourself out and one more thing, Dumbledore, I just took control of the Fidelius Charm, you will not be able to give out the secret without my permission."

Dumbledore nodded, he felt it as well. Once the lockdown ended, he needed to check up to ensure the Death Eaters reached their intended destination as he watched Harry and the others walk out.

"You should have just removed Dumbledore as Headmaster, as he's going to be a problem," suggested Astoria.

"If Dumbledore remains Headmaster, I'll be able to keep an eye on him and the same with Snape, but the threat that I can punish them will keep them in check for long enough for me to do what needs to be done and I still have a use for him to keep Voldemort from attacking Hogwarts," said Harry in a tired voice as he motioned for Neville to take an empty room and then walked the girls across the hall. Astoria walked in immediately, but Daphne paused, before she turned to Harry. "Yes, what is it?"

"You conducted yourself with real authority in there, fitting of a pureblood family head of your stature, you didn't blow up at Dumbledore as badly as you could have," said Daphne. "Perhaps there is some potential in you after all, perhaps you aren't the hopelessly naïve inept Gryffindor that I thought you were. This is just one battle though but for right now, you did well enough and you're on your way to being something that's fitting of your hype. You weren't embarrassing in there, I'll tell you that much."

“Thanks, that’s high praise coming from you,” said Harry and Daphne just responded with a nod, as she looked at Harry for a few more seconds, as if trying to piece together an intriguing puzzle.

“Don’t think I’m going to stop criticizing you if you do something so glaringly stupid though,” said Daphne. “But given your remarkable level of improvement, I might get less opportunities than before .”

“I hope so,” said Harry calmly.

“Then again, I might be even more critical than before, considering I know I can expect better from you,” said Daphne as she turned her head to hide a brief smile. “Good night, Harry.”

A second before Harry had a chance to respond, she was gone. She was certainly an intriguing enigma, nothing like any of his other friends, and Harry turned to head to the library for a chance to clear his head. He had been through a lot recently and now that he said his piece to Dumbledore, he needed a chance to catch his breath before he explained his last couple of days to the others.

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It was a joyous day in Gringotts. In fact, any day where they could make the lives of a human or multiple humans very unpleasant was a great day. Case in point, the Dursleys, the former guardians of the Boy-Who-Lived, who were tried and convicted as being accessories to the crimes of Albus Dumbledore. Vernon had been the worst, what the goblins found about him and the fact he had threatened the goblins, which was a completely stupid thing to do. He had not only abused his nephew, but he had embezzled his company’s money and had been having an affair with his underage Muggle secretary.

Needless to say, there would be a Muggle prison inmate named Bubba who would be getting a new girlfriend within the next few hours.

Petunia had also been convicted. Her sentence had been a bit less harsh. She would be bound to Gringotts as a goblin slave for the rest of her life. She would have to clean up dragon dung, wash the blood

stains off of their battle armor, sharpen bladed weapons. Not to mention she would have to satisfy the weird fetishes of some of the more eccentric goblins.

Dudley Dursley on the other hand would be shipped off to a Muggle boot camp where he would hopefully be molded into a respectable member of society. Some of the goblins were hoping to use him as target practice but fortunately for Dudley more rational heads prevailed. They would have to settle for Dumbledore, once he had foolishly walked into their bank the next time but they were not holding out hope for that to be anytime soon. Thanks to the treaty from the last goblin members, the goblins could not go after purebloods who had committed fraud against Gringotts. Oddly enough half bloods, Muggleborns, and Muggles were no problem and that was a loop hole that the goblins had exploited time and time again.

Still, it was not worth starting another goblin rebellion over. There would come a time where Dumbledore would think himself to be untouchable and walk into their bank, attempting to play Merlin and they would have him. In fact, perhaps it would be a blessing in disguise that they were not able to nab Dumbledore right away.

It would allow them to think up a more creative and bloody end to Dumbledore.

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To say Cornelius Fudge was desperate would be the understatement of the century. He was Minister of Magic, just barely, and was writing to Dumbledore daily trying to convince him to make the boy endorse him. So far, no luck and later this morning, the Wizengamot would decide his ultimate fate. The process could take anywhere from hours to a couple of weeks, but Fudge feared what would happen.

“Minister, I’m here to speak to you on an urgent matter,” said Dumbledore and Fudge looked up, a bit irritated. The old man had that annoying habit of walking into the office whenever he pleased. If Fudge did not need his support just to avoid landing a cell in Azkaban, he would tell him off.

“Albus, please, get the boy, the votes this morning, I need to stay in charge, the political upheaval will cripple the Ministry of Magic and leave it open to him,” said Fudge in desperation.

“I’m afraid this is impossible, Cornelius, as I have gently informed you the past eighteen times,” said Dumbledore calmly. “I want to speak of you regarding the matter of Lucius Malfoy. I have reason to believe he is not in Azkaban as I had believed.”

“Albus, pardon me for being so blunt, but that’s absurd,” said Cornelius and Dumbledore looked at him. “I conduct daily inspections of Azkaban, it gets me out of the office if anything else and I have spoken to Lucius every day. He seems in good spirits and rather regretful of what he was forced into doing. Blackmail, You-Know-Who threatened his family if he would not join him this time around, if I had the political capital, I would get him out of Azkaban.”

“So that’s your angle this time, Lucius,” muttered Dumbledore but he turned away. “I have heard rumors that Lucius was sighted and I would like to pay a visit to Azkaban to ensure he is in his proper place.”

“It is your right as Chief Warlock, Albus,” said Fudge in a completely deflated tone of voice, as if he had given up all hope of living and Dumbledore turned as Fudge removed a Portkey from the drawer of his desk. Dumbledore reached over, as Fudge activated it, sending them right into Azkaban. Once he reached the island, he was a bit surprised with what he had seen.

“I see the Dementors remain on this island, Cornelius,” said Dumbledore.

“Yes, some of them deserted us to join You-Know-Who, while others remained behind, much like humans, their loyalties are divided in this matter,” said Fudge as he held up his Portkey, as the Dementors stepped to the side, allowing the two wizards entry into the prison. Dumbledore looked slightly uneasy at the Dementors remaining but he decided it was not the best time to argue this point. The fact that Fudge would no longer be the Ministry of Magic before long made the



point irrelevant and he could convince the new Minister, whoever that might be, to completely remove the Dementors. "The Death Eaters that were captured last night have been brought to this wing to await trial; we had to sedate some of the more boisterous prisoners for obvious reasons."

At this point, they walked past the cell containing Bellatrix Lestrange who was humming the Hogwarts school song with a glazed look in her eyes.

"And here's Lucius," said Cornelius and Dumbledore looked in the cell, to see Lucius Malfoy sitting on a stone bench, legs crossed, with a calm look on his face as he turned towards Dumbledore.

"Minister," said Lucius with a calm nod and he turned to Dumbledore. "And Dumbledore, what do I owe this pleasure?"

"Good day, Lucius," said Dumbledore calmly, as none of this made any sense. He distinctively remembered talking to Lucius earlier in the morning, before the entire mess with Harry went down. The moment the lockdown ended, he was off to the Ministry of Magic to inform Fudge but the man was here in his cell. He cast a few spells, but no concealments or Polyjuice Potions were detected, this was Lucius Malfoy. "I heard a rumor you had been sighted with your...associates and you can understand the need for me to investigate it."

"Of course, Dumbledore, of course, I do, but I've been here since my crushing defeat at the hands of Harry Potter and his friends," commented Lucius in a calm, sedated voice. "Perhaps it was imposter, the head of a rival family slandering my name?"

"Perhaps, Lucius," said Dumbledore as a very imposing looking Dementor, who caused many of the inmates to back off in fear.

"The elder Dementor here at Azkaban, Dumbledore," said Fudge in a fearful voice as the Dementor turned to them.

"Ah yes, the Warden, as he has been so inventively dubbed," said Dumbledore, who had heard rumors about this Dementor. He was

rumored to be the product of a union between a male Dementor and a human woman, although for his own sanity, Dumbledore did not delve into this matter too thoroughly.

“Greetings, Dumbledore,” rasped the Warden softly, his rattling cold breath hitting Dumbledore in the face. “I do thank you for what you have done. My children thank you as well for all you have done, providing us with these human disappointments for us to keep in check.”

“You should thank the Ministry of Magic for the role they have played,” said Dumbledore who took a step back. He normally could avoid the powers of the Dementors, but this one was particularly powerful.

“Yes well, now that Lucius is in place, we really must be going,” said Fudge. The Minister did not want to be as close to the Warden for a long period of time and Dumbledore nodded.

The Warden hovered, watching the two wizards leave, his rattling breath still filling the air, as he looked forward, watching them leave, before his rattling breath turned into a high cold laugh.

“Those fools,” hissed a voice from underneath the hood. “They never expected a thing.”

“Your plan worked well, my Lord,” said Lucius approvingly as the Warden pulled his hood down to reveal the face of Lord Voldemort, removing a magically made voice distorter from inside his hood. Thanks to a few inventive charms of his own, he had managed to duplicate the cold, hopeless feelings that a Dementor caused. “That old legend worked well in deceiving Dumbledore. The old man doesn’t expect anything; just like he has yet to catch onto the false tales I fed Severus to mislead him and his foolish Order into the wrong direction.”

“Will I get to kill Snape when he outlives his usefulness?” asked Bellatrix.

“Perhaps, Bellatrix,” said Voldemort in a faux fatherly manner, as he turned away, amused by his own brilliant plan. The only thing about the plan that disappointed him was that he did not think about implementing it sooner.

Azkaban made the perfect main base of operations.

And that’s the end of Chapter Five and I have nothing of value to add except a bit more confrontation next chapter and events move forward.

## Chapter Six: Awkward Explanations

The lockdown concluded just moments ago and Harry could already tell that Dumbledore bolted from the house, most likely to reevaluate his options. The sun was coming up and the others would be out of bed, if they had not already gotten up right away. Harry had barricaded himself inside the library, trying to find useful books that not had been purged. He could care less about turning mice into marbles or whatever useless Transfiguration that passed as an education for Hogwarts. He wanted to find the good stuff, but unfortunately most of that had been pitched by Molly Weasley under the orders of Dumbledore, most likely out of fear that Harry or maybe anyone else in that house might learn something that the great and powerful Albus Dumbledore did not approve of. Still, regardless of that fact, Harry managed to uncover a few interesting books which would be worthy of study for the future. Once he got to Hogwarts, he would have unlimited access, thanks to his rights as the last remaining heir. It was a good thing that Voldemort never found out about his rights before the unfortunate accident that he suffered that transferred all of his abilities to Harry.

Voldemort was another concern for Harry. The goblins mentioned while he existed, he was not considered alive or human by goblin and magical law. Voldemort was flesh, blood, and bone, yet not alive, by some magical loophole. Harry briefly wondered how he could kill something that was not truly alive, and that brought him back to the point where he was before Daphne showed up. He was woefully behind, despite the fact that Voldemort was some inhumane abomination now, he still had his abilities and his knowledge, beyond what Harry had.

Now with the wards on him removed, Harry tried not to panic on a level that would make Hermione tell him he was overreacting about how much he did not know. He had abilities and power that was untapped, it would take months for him to be able to even train the abilities he had. He had looked over the rolls of parchment that the goblins gave him, it was a great deal of information and he had read it three times, picking up new bits and pieces. It was amazing that he apparated correctly on his first try, without any proper training and managed to navigate three people around a Fidelius Charm, even

before he got control of the charm. He had told Dumbledore and the Order only a small part of what he had found out. He had to keep Dumbledore wondering and have something to hold over the old man's head should he try to get around the oath Harry forced him to make.

Harry heard some movements outside and he thought it would be best to come down and make his presence known to the others in the house. He did not look forward to having to explain this entire mess again, mentally going over what he was going to say and what he would have to leave out. This would all come up sooner or later, especially when Harry turned up as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

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Daphne was not looking forward to sharing a house with the Weasleys and Granger. All of them had their good points, she supposed, but the funny thing was she was more agitated with Potter at first because of his choice of friends, rather than anything he did. Potter was showing more potential, she wondered how good he might have been had he been given the proper direction and motivation from the beginning. Maybe if he had been sorted into Slytherin, but it was useless to think of what might have been in the past. The present and the future were the two things that she was most concerned about.

"Daphne?" asked Astoria sleepily as she woke up at her sister moving around the room.

"Yes, what is it?" asked Daphne.

"Our parents...you think they might still be alive?" questioned Astoria in a tentative voice.

"I don't know," said Daphne calmly. "You said they were removed shortly after I left to try and find a way out of this mess. Seems to me like they could very well be dead, but what's done is done. Besides, after what Father tried to do, trying to sell us out to clear up his own

mess, Mother would have protested it, but not too much to make a difference.”

“I won’t rest until I find out if they’re alive or not,” said Astoria firmly.

“Do what you feel is right, but it’s highly likely they’ve just ended up as another statistic in this senseless conflict,” said Daphne as she averted her eyes, to hide the expression of sorrow, but she turned. “Harry was right about one thing, they never intended to give us our freedom. You were going to be given to Malfoy, to be used as little more than a plaything, I bet they had something similar in mind.”

“You could have run,” said Astoria calmly. “You got out of there.”

“I could have,” agreed Daphne. “But I didn’t, I tried to make a situation work that there was no option but failure as far as I’m concerned. If it wasn’t for Harry, there would have been no way I would have gotten you out of there. His plan to use the Order of the Phoenix to distract the Death Eaters was...actually not what I expected from someone like him.”

“Yeah, I suppose it was,” agreed Astoria before she paused and decided to ask a question that had been on her mind. “So what’s up with Potter?”

“I don’t know what you mean, Astoria,” replied Daphne in a calm voice.

“You obviously trusted him enough to let him in on our family’s problems and have his help in rescuing me,” said Astoria. “In fact, I don’t think you and Potter have really interacted before now that I can see...”

“I’ve encountered him more than a few times, we’ve exchanged a few words, kind of hard not to when I’ve been in Potions with him for five years,” said Daphne slowly, pausing, as if choosing her next words very carefully. “At first he came across as your usual brash and hot headed Gryffindor, with no sense at all. You know the type that hexes first and asks questions...well never. The more time I’ve spent around him, I’ve found that he’s something more, even if he doesn’t

have the opportunity to show it. He is a product of his surroundings, but there's something else. It's intriguing, I'll say that much."

"If you say so," said Astoria in a skeptical voice. "Do you really trust him?"

"Trust is delicate, something that I don't give easily," said Daphne but she looked, as she paused. "I trust him, but as for his friends...no absolutely not. I have no patience for Granger and Weasley. Potter on the other hand, he's the best chance all of us have to survive this war. Voldemort and Dumbledore will tear the Ministry apart with their games and whoever wins will fight over the scraps."

"Maybe," said Astoria in a grudging voice as she went to get dressed as Daphne looked, hearing voices on the stairs and many people moving.

"Better get dressed, we have to deal with this sooner or later," said Daphne. "Weasleys and Mudbloods and Salazar only knows what else is down there."

"Joy," stated Astoria through gritted teeth. She truly felt uncomfortable in this place and trusted no one. Maybe her sister and perhaps Potter, if what Daphne thought about him was true but that was the extent of trust the girl was willing to willingly give right now.

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Hermione was distracted as she walked down the hallway. According to Dumbledore, Harry was supposed to arrive today, but something had been nagging at her ever since Dumbledore had spoke to her and Ron. She supposed she was being silly, to think that Dumbledore would be keeping something from them about Harry. He would have at least told them something, wouldn't of he? She had no idea what was up with Ron either, he had been acting rather off since the Department of Mysteries, since he was attacked with those brains. She wondered if their were side effects, the changes of his personality.

Hermione stopped when she had almost ran into Ginny as she was moving down the hallway.

"Oh, hello Ginny, almost didn't see you there," said Hermione in a distracted voice. "What's wrong?"

"Mum's going stir downstairs, she's ranting about being locked out of the house," said Ginny as she looked about confused about the entire situation.

"Why was she locked out of the house?" asked Hermione. "In fact, how was she locked out of the house? Dumbledore checked to make sure there were no nasty surprises that kicked in after Sirius died..."

"What I'd like to know is what she was doing out of the house last night when she got locked out," said Ginny with a frown.

"I suspect it was Order business of some sort," said Hermione with a shrug. "Really nothing we should be concerned of."

"Yeah, it's not like we'd know away," said Ron who had just arrived up the stairs. "Sounds like Mum just got in, she normally has breakfast ready by the time we wake up and I would be careful, she's not in the best of moods right now."

"That's the best way to check whether or not Mum's a Polyjuiced imposter, though," commented Ginny lightly. "If she has the ability to keep her temper, than it's not her."

Ron and Hermione laughed for a brief second, before Hermione grew suddenly serious.

"What is it Hermione?" asked Ron.

"It's about Harry," said Hermione in a calm voice and the other two Weasleys turned to her. "I don't know it's just..."

"You gave some thought to what I said about Dumbledore knowing more than he's letting on," said Ron calmly.



"Ron it's just not...I don't know, Dumbledore would have told us," said Hermione desperately.

"Who are you trying to convince, Hermione, us or yourself?" asked Ginny calmly.

"The fact is, your mother would be worrying up even more of a storm if Harry was really in danger," said Hermione in a voice that indicated this explained everything.

"Unless Dumbledore decided not to tell her either," responded Ron and Hermione just looked at him. "Look, there's so much that's being kept from us, but Dumbledore just comes off as someone who is keeping even more secrets from everyone. He seems to think he's the only one who can cope with the harsh realities of the world."

"What do you think Ginny?" asked Hermione, hoping to get an opinion other than Ron's.

"I don't know," said Ginny in a tentative tone of voice. "You know Harry much better than I do and...we've been brought up to know that Dumbledore knows best. You know, if you can't trust Dumbledore, then who can you trust, and all that good stuff. Still, I think Ron might actually be right about this...there's something more to this than meets the eye."

"Harry was sent back to those...relatives of his," said Ron with disdain in his voice. "Can't be healthy, even I know that..."

"And besides, I think it was a mistake not telling Harry about the Burrow nearly getting blown up with us inside, I don't even think Mum realizes how close we are," said Ginny as she shuddered. "Remember last summer when Harry had things kept from him? Well this is going to be worse."

"Thanks for those words of inspiration, Ginny," said Ron with a shudder. Once again, it was a damn good thing that Harry did not know how to make a Howler and Ron hoped that day would never come.

“Harry has to be alright,” said Hermione. “He’s supposed to be coming here today and everything will be fine.”

“After having an entire summer to brood about not being told anything, I sincerely doubt it,” said Ginny.

“For the record, Harry is fine, no thanks to anything Dumbledore did,” said a voice which caused the three teenagers to spin around in surprise, as they saw Neville standing in the hallway.

“Neville what are you doing here?” asked Hermione in a surprised tone of voice.

“It’s a very long story,” said Neville. “I suppose you heard the news about what happened...”

“No, we haven’t heard anything,” said Ginny and Neville took a deep breath, it would be a lot easier than if they had known but he decided to throw all caution to the wind to explain it them.

“Well about a day ago, some Death Eaters, lead by Bellatrix Lestrangle, decided to get some revenge on what happened in the Department of Mysteries,” said Neville slowly as the other three looked at them. “Gran was caught off guard, she managed to fight some of them off but was overwhelmed and...she didn’t make it.”

“Oh my,” gasped Ginny in a horrified voice but Neville just took a deep breath.

“I did better than I expected, thanks to the D.A. last year,” said Neville slowly as if trying to maintain his composure. “Managed to catch Lestrangle off guard, barely, I was lucky with that one but then I was attacked behind by him...V-V-Voldemort.”

“Neville that’s awful, how wasn’t it you weren’t killed?” asked Hermione.

“Thought I would have some information about Harry, good thing I didn’t, didn’t stop Snape from going through my mind,” said Neville as he winced. Snape spared no mercy with Neville. Neville had heard

the rumors he was a double agent, but he played his part a little too well. "I don't know what happened until I was rescued earlier this morning mostly a blank..."

"Well it's obvious You-Know-Who doesn't take his Death Eaters losing to teenagers very well, I mean you don't need to be Hermione to figure out what's going on here," said Ron and Hermione gave him a slightly disapproving look. "He tried to blow up the Burrow with us inside, the advanced security wards Bill put around it detected them coming at the last seconds. We just got out of there..."

"Yes, so that's us and Neville, Luna's out of the country right now with her father, I don't even know if the Death Eaters even recognized her," said Ginny as if trying to piece together everything that happened. "Maybe something did happen to Harry and Dumbledore's not..."

"Oh for heaven's sake Ginny, not you too," said Hermione an irritated tone. "You heard what Dumbledore said, there could be no harm to Harry when he was inside his relatives house. He mentioned some kind of blood protections, those are supposed to be really powerful, Voldemort couldn't even get in there."

"Yes blood protections, really potent against the guy who stole your blood for a ritual to return himself back to life," muttered Ron underneath his breath but Hermione chose to ignore him.

"Good thing Dumbledore managed to get there before too much damage was done," said Hermione approvingly.

"It wasn't Dumbledore who saved me, Hermione," said Neville and that caused Hermione to do a double take, as she stared at Neville, a look of confusion on her face and many questions that she wanted to have answered. Thankfully Neville decided it would just be best to inform them of the other guests. "One more thing that you need to know before you head for breakfast is there are other guests here that were saved here from Malfoy Manor. Just to give you the heads up that they're here because you might not like it but there is a good reason why they're here."

“Exactly why might not we like why they’re here?” asked Ginny curiously.

“Not my place to say,” said Neville in a calm voice. “Just promise me that you won’t have any freak outs about it, all of you.”

“You know, normally when someone says that, that’s a good indication that there is a good reason to be worried,” said Ginny but Neville just looked at them all. “I mean, it’s not like they’re Death Eaters or anything.”

“No, but still, the opinion of someone who I respect greatly has a good reason for both of them being here,” said Neville and the other three looked at him with quizzical looks on their faces. “It’s up to him to tell you, I trust you’ll meet them first for whatever reason.”

The nodded as they made their way outside of the kitchen, Molly Weasley had just finished ranting and began putting the finishing touches on making breakfast.

“So are you three the only other people that are here?” asked Neville.

“People come and go on time, but mostly its us, Mum, and Dad when he gets off of work,” supplied Ginny. “The twins are minding the shop, Bill and Charlie are mostly overseas doing work for the Order, and Percy still has a stick firmly wedged up his...”

“Ginny!” shouted Hermione in a scandalized voice.

“Well it’s the truth, the prat never admitted he was wrong,” said Ginny. “He seems to think that we should be the one’s apologizing to him, as if. It’s one thing to go against Harry or Dumbledore, but the things he said to our parents, especially to Dad, I’ll never forget or forgive them but...”

“RON, GINNY, HERMIONE!” called Molly from inside the kitchen. “Please get inside, breakfast is ready.”

Seconds later, the door pushed open with Ron leading the way and Molly looked caught off guard by Neville's presence for a few seconds before she adjusted her face into a relieved look.

"Hello, Neville dear, I can say I'm pleased to see you safe, sorry to hear what happened to your grandmother, she was truly a good woman, fully on the right side," said Molly in a kind voice as she motioned for Neville to sit down. "Dumbledore must have found out a way to get to you after all, after all that happened..."

"Dumbledore didn't save me Mrs. Weasley," said Neville and Molly looked a bit shocked, before she shook her head. The poor boy must have been confused after his ordeal, who else could have saved him from a high security Death Eater stronghold. While she strongly disagreed with Dumbledore putting Harry with those horrible Muggles, he still was the best man to lead them to the war instead she put the finishing touches on breakfast before she served it.

At that moment, Daphne and Astoria walked through the kitchen door, boldly causing the occupants of the table to look up with dumbstruck looks on their faces, with the exception of Neville who looked amused. Hermione managed to find her voice suddenly.

"What are they doing here?" demanded Hermione.

"Hello to you too, Granger," said Daphne with a bit of sarcasm as she helped herself to a piece of toast.

"Who are these two?" asked Molly in confusion but Hermione looked like she had been forced to swallow something very nasty and bitter.

"Daphne Greengrass, she's in our year, but in Slytherin," said Hermione to Molly, who recognized the last name immediately. It was a name mentioned to Dumbledore about possible families that You-Know-Who had his eye on to join his ranks and had not pledged themselves to the Order of the Phoenix. "And this is her younger sister, if not mistaken."

“The guests, I take it,” Ginny muttered to Neville who nodded, as Ron looked like he was struggling with some internal conflict but Molly looked a bit angered by their presence.

“And what are you two ladies doing here?” asked Molly in a calm voice but she was agitated beyond all belief, as she looked at them with a distrustful look.

“We’re guests of the owner of this house, we have permission to be here,” said Daphne calmly as if she sat down and Molly looked in panic. It was possible that Lestrangle or Narcissa Black had inherited the Black family home. She did not know if Sirius was responsible enough to make a will that would make arrangements for his family properties and if he was not, it would likely to go to the next in line and given goblin law, they would not take little things like being a fugitive escaped from Azkaban into account.

But surely, Albus would not put them in danger?

“And just who would this owner of the house be?” asked Molly and if on cue, the door opened, revealing Harry Potter.

“That would be me,” said Harry and it took Ron, Ginny, and Hermione, along with Mrs. Weasley, several seconds to realize that Harry was in fact there.

“Harry?” asked Ron.

“Harry,” said Ginny at approximately the same time.

“HARRY!” screamed Hermione in surprise.

“Yes, it’s nice to know you’ve all remembered my name,” said Harry dryly, as Daphne gave him what passed for her as a smile.

“I thought Dumbledore wasn’t going to have you brought here until later today, Harry,” said Hermione but Harry just looked at her calmly.

“Since this is my house, I feel that I have the right to show up whenever I want to,” said Harry. “Given the fact that I’m technically of

age, I'm afraid that Dumbledore has no say in any matters that I'm involved in with the exception of Hogwarts...actually scratch that one as well given the special circumstances that I found out."

"What do you mean you're of age, Harry?" asked Molly, who was glad to see Harry away from those Muggles. The poor boy looked dreadfully skinny. "I don't know how it is in the Muggle world but seventeen is the age..."

"That would be true, except if I wasn't the last living heir to one of the fifteen families," said Harry and that got strange looks from everyone but Neville, Daphne, and Astoria. "You know, the founders of the Ministry of Magic, the first members of the Wizengamot, all that sort of thing."

"The fifteen families?" sputtered Molly. "I thought that was just a myth..."

"No, it's very real and which means in the eyes of the supreme ancient magical laws that overrule anything that the Ministry or Dumbledore can try to force through means that I'm an adult once I had completed my Ordinary Wizarding Level exams," said Harry at the mention of the O., Hermione's ears perked up. "No Hermione, I don't know when they're coming. I'm sure you passed everything."

Harry took a deep breath.

"I don't want to really explain this again, but the fact remains that I'm an adult based on my rights and I should have never been sent to the Dursleys, but it doesn't matter because now I'm an adult according to the goblins and have no way to be forced back," said Harry, who thought it was of uttermost importance to stress that he was an adult in front of Molly Weasley, who would throw a fit when she realized what Harry had basically coerced Dumbledore into doing. "I also inherited this house, a couple of other nice, but not as vast as this, properties, and a few thousand Galleons from Sirius's estate. Looks like the old mutt was responsible enough to make out a will after all, eh, Mrs. Weasley."

Molly looked embarrassed, at Harry had repeated her thoughts from earlier.

"I see you've met my guests, I had just gotten back from a trip from Malfoy Manor..." stated Harry.

"So that's where they were holding you!" cried Molly who had heard rumors about the torture chambers Lucius Malfoy had in his estate. Ginny and Hermione looked worried as well and even Ron looked sympathetic where Daphne rolled her eyes slightly. "Poor thing, you must be..."

"Stop, I was never captured, I left willingly, thanks to Daphne right here, it was quite the coincidence she happened to decide to lift a few items," said Harry.

"Those Muggles you live with have the worst taste I've ever seen and that's a lot considering how many tacky pureblood homes I've been in," said Daphne as she stuck her nose slightly up in the air at the memory. "Not to mention the fact that they are inhumane, uncouth barbarians. Locking a magical child in a cupboard, perhaps it's lucky for them that Dumbledore did find a way to limit your powers..."

"What's this about a cupboard?" asked Hermione.

"What's this about Dumbledore finding a way to limit your powers?" asked Ron at the same time. True, the cupboard thing was a concern.

"You know those supreme blood protections that our fearless leader put into place," said Harry calmly and the others nodded, even Molly was listening in, all thoughts of breakfast thought. She knew Harry was being mistreated but if she was getting this right, it looks like Harry spent his days as a young child in a cupboard. She thought Fred and George were overreacting when they said bars were on Harry's window but now she was not convinced. "Well, Dumbledore decided that for my own good, he might add a few more additions, found when the goblins made a full sweep of the property."



“What kind of additions?” asked Hermione, who felt betrayed if any of this was true and she knew by the determined look in Harry’s eyes this unfortunate statement was completely true, not to mention the fact that goblins rarely lied. They might be blood thirsty, vicious, and quite nasty, but goblins never lied. Dumbledore might have his reasons but were these reasons beyond any reason.

“Nothing much, just a ward or two here to suppress my natural abilities, a couple of little additions to make me a bit less inclined to join in on the educational process and limit my desire, my ambitions to learn,” said Harry casually. “The most interesting addition of all was a loyalty oath that Dumbledore tied into the wards. By agreeing to return there, I would agree to another year under the loyalty oath and not question Dumbledore’s decisions. However, the interesting part is, I had went there because I had to during a time where I was still under the previous round of the loyalty oath. So, quite sneaky, wouldn’t you say so?”

No one knew what to say. Daphne and Astoria looked back and forth, almost enjoying the fact that Dumbledore’s reputation was being torn down. It was one thing to use adults for your own means but to use a child.

“That’s the past, it’s all done, trust me, I never have to deal with the Dursleys ever again, the goblins managed to take care of them, they are in the tender loving care of the goblins for their part in the crimes,” said Harry. “Dumbledore would be too, if he is foolish enough to step one foot into Gringotts.”

“I’m going to have that man a piece of my mind, I can’t believe he would do it,” said Molly but Harry put his hand up.

“It wouldn’t do you any good, he would somehow convince you that he was in the right and had no idea that I was being mistreated, even though his words or by his wand,” said Harry as the others looked at him. “I only managed to get him to listen me because I ripped a page out of his book. The lockdown, that was my right and I silenced him, forcing him to take an oath. He and I know the contents and that’s really all that matters.”

“So that was you that locked us out, Harry,” said Molly. “We thought Bellatrix Lestrange or Narcissa Malfoy had gotten their hands on the property and sealed the people inside to kill them...”

“No, nothing like that, I had no choice, but that’s done,” said Harry. “Besides, I found something interesting about what happened the night that Voldemort tried to kill me. To make a long story, short, he forfeited any rights he had to Hogwarts, passing them along to me and being the last living heir, I own Hogwarts thanks to a very blatant breach of protocol named Dolores Umbridge. The Ministry had no right to interfere, yet Dumbledore allowed them to. The Board of Governors was pushing it too. So now I own Hogwarts and have final say under any decisions.”

“So that means you can fire Dumbledore,” summarized Ginny.

“I could if it would do any good, but he still has his uses,” said Harry. “Namely keeping Voldemort from attacking Hogwarts, remember, Voldemort still fears Dumbledore and I tend to exploit that to my fullest advantage. Besides, I need someone to handle the day to day operations. I don’t like to micro manage.”

“At least say that you’re getting rid of Snape,” said Ron in a hopeful voice but Harry shook his head.

“I figure I’d give him a chance, which might just prove once and for all that I’m too nice for my own good, but if he steps one toe out of line, he’ll wish he didn’t,” said Harry in a calm tone of voice that left no room for argument. “As for Hogwarts, I’m the one who has the final say over it, not the Ministry, not Dumbledore, not anyone else.”

Harry paused and took a deep breath.

“Oh and by the way, I’m your new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher for this year,” said Harry which caused surprised looks.

“Well, who else would be better for the job, Harry, you did teach us well enough to not embarrass ourselves against the Death Eaters at the Department of Mysteries,” said Ron.

"This is a big responsibility Harry, you have to teach a lot more people than you did in the D.A.," said Hermione who looked both anxious and excited. "I mean, you have to figure out what each year knows, because our teaching is quite fragmented, what kind of books will you assign us?"

"I intend to find a balance between teaching you what you need to know to pass your exams and what actually might be of some use to you to decide," said Harry. "The first lesson is that no matter how good we did in the Department of Mysteries, it could have been a lot worse. The Inner Circle treated us like children and they got their backsides handed to them. If they had not been so cocky, we would have been defeated within seconds, maybe a couple of minutes. Nothing that we learned in any book would have helped us survive, that's why I have decided to shelve the theory portion of the class and focus on the practical portion of the class. The means learning all the spells that I teach you, and perfecting them without fail, all of them without fail and exactly as I tell you they should be perfected."

"And what happens if we don't?" asked Ginny.

"You fail," said Harry calmly. "There will be two grades given in my class. Outstanding or Troll, and somehow I feel that the vast majority of the school will fall into the second category."

"Harry, you just can't just throw out the theory, we need it to pass our N.E.," said Hermione.

"Not my concern," said Harry softly. "Exams will be meaningless should Voldemort take over. If you want to study the theory, great, just don't expect to pass my class based on theory that is so misinformed and keeps us closed minded it isn't even funny."

"It's the way that we have been taught for years, Harry," said Molly in a would be reasonable voice. She was concerned that Harry was taking on too much responsibility in such a short amount of time and it might be too much for the boy to handle, but she decided it would not be best to voice her concerns.

"Yeah Harry, I can see you wanting to improve the Defense class," said Ron in a tentative voice. "But people might not..."

"You know, if I wanted to do things that people would like, I would have left Hogwarts in control of Dumbledore," said Harry. "The war is coming, in fact it's already here, and Voldemort won't sit back, worrying about what people think about him. Say what you want about Dumbledore or Voldemort, but they are respected and feared on both sides of the problem for one reason. They are the best of what they do, but if I have to be able to play their games I will have to do so on their level. They have decades of experience on me, but I have one distinct advantage. The most powerful magical structure in all of Europe, maybe in the world, is in my hands and I plan to use my control of it to my advantage. And the Ministry, the Order, Dumbledore, or anyone else who doesn't agree with it can go to hell for all I'm concerned."

"So that's what you think you need to do Harry," challenged Ginny. "Stoop to their level..."

"Yes, Ginny, that's exactly what I think I need to do, mostly because that is what I have to do," said Harry who was not intimidated by the glare she was giving him at all. "I never said this was the most pleasant thing in the world to do but it's something I have to do. I have no room for liabilities or weakness in my life. If you're questioning some little changes to do with the education, what happens later? I can't afford to have anyone questioning my actions, friends or not. I plan to win at all costs or die trying. And if that means trimming some of the weaker elements from my life to avoid being hung on distractions, that so be it."

"Harry, don't you think you're being irrational?" asked Ron reluctantly. He hated having to be the voice of reason, it was a role that he was unfamiliar with.

"I've never been more rational in my life," said Harry. "Is it with me or is it with the people who will let something like Voldemort happen again and again? Think about it hard and Hermione, I'm afraid the answer is something you won't find in a book."

Harry turned to Molly after those words.

"Breakfast looks great as always, but I'm afraid I'm not hungry this morning, I'll be around," said Harry shortly as he stormed off, leaving Ron and Hermione looking dumbstruck but Ginny turned her attention to Daphne, who looked quite amused at what just occurred.

"This all your fault," said Ginny hotly.

"My fault?" asked Daphne calmly.

"Yes, it's obvious that Harry has been with you for the last couple of days, what did you put in his head?" demanded Hermione.

"Other than criticism that he was a naïve little twit that would last about as long with You-Know-Who as a husband lasts with Zabini's mother if he didn't start thinking like a Slytherin, nothing much," said Daphne calmly. "Guess Harry must have taken that criticism a bit too much to heart. Good for him."

"Oh so we're on a first name basis, now, are we?" asked Hermione in an agitated voice.

"Well he did help me save Astoria from the horror of being given to Draco Malfoy as a plaything, so yes, I suppose we are," said Daphne smugly as she looked at Hermione. The girl was a Gryffindor alright, she looked like she wanted to rip Daphne's head off and punt it through a window. "Guess Harry's not allowed to interact with anyone without the consent of the almighty princess of the library, Hermione Granger."

"I'm concerned that you're a bad influence on Harry and is leading him down a path that's not for his best interests," hissed Hermione angrily.

"Do you want Harry to be killed by You-Know-Who?" asked Daphne.

"Of course we don't!" snapped Ginny. "It's just that what Harry says he's going to do..."

"Might be the only way he has a hope of living," interjected Daphne. "Listen to me, none of you would survive the way you're thinking right now, it's pure luck that you survived the last time, as Harry rightfully pointed out. You know nothing about doing what is necessary."

"And I suppose you do," said Hermione through gritted teeth.

"I don't, but you better hope that Harry figures out a way to know, otherwise the other options aren't exactly that great," said Daphne in a manner that indicated she was not in the mood to argue with Gryffindors today. Harry was right, they were following a way of life that allowed Voldemort to happen. Gryffindors felt that all Slytherins were evil without fail which granted a good majority of them were. Still many that might have had a chance were branded as outcasts and turned to Voldemort for sanctuary. Dumbledore did nothing to discourage this belief.

Daphne sighed as she looked at the disapproving glares that Molly Weasley was giving her. She obviously thought that Daphne was being a negative influence on Harry as Hermione did but she decided not to say anything, even though the glares she was giving Daphne was enough to tell the story. There was one thing that all of them failed to realize and Daphne hoped that for their sakes, they would get it through their thick skulls.

They needed Harry Potter a whole of a hell lot more than he needed them and that was as simple as that.

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Cornelius Fudge was sweating up a storm. They were in the Wizengamot right now and beginning to go over evidence and Fudge was nervous of what they might have found. Granted, he did not do anything too bad, maybe he took a bribe here or there to look the other way, but really, every politician did that once in a while. The trial could end in a day or maybe several weeks, but Fudge was looking dark. Any minute, he could be called in give his side of the story, depending on how much evidence the Wizengamot gathered up.

"I understand you wished to see me, Minister," said a voice that made Fudge nearly hit the ceiling before he spun around to see Harry Potter standing in the door of his office. "You know, your security is rather poor, if I would have been a Death Eater, you would be dead right now."

"Harry, thank the heavens, you've arrived," said Fudge who would be dancing, if not for the fact it was not dignified. "I thought Dumbledore said it was impossible for you to come..."

"Albus Dumbledore assumes he has dictatorial control me, but I hope he's learned his lesson," said Harry as he turned to Fudge. "Things don't look too good, do they Minister?"

"No Harry, but you're here, you can speak out for me," said Fudge in a joyous voice.

"Just one question, why should I help you?" asked Harry and Fudge looked downcast. "After last year, the Ministry tore me down, Umbridge made my life a living hell, and your inaction caused Voldemort to go for a year unchecked. So, why should I help you?"

"Come on Harry, there's a good boy, the past is the past, let bygones be bygones," said Fudge as he looked at Harry. "I'll give you anything if you give me the good word, use your fame, convince them that I was given false information, tell them that Dumbledore didn't give me enough evidence to allow me to make an informed decision. I'll give you anything, Harry, just please I need to..."

"You'll give me anything, Minister?" asked Harry and Fudge nodded, before he paused, wondering if he had perhaps gone too far in his desperation and Harry turned to Fudge. "Two things, Minister, I want three things."

"Name them Harry," said Fudge in a resigned voice, knowing this was going to hurt later on, but he needed to remain Minister, he had grown accustomed to the power of the office he held.

“Fire Umbridge and throw her into Azkaban,” said Harry simply and Fudge nodded.

“Good, no problem Harry, I’ll send the Aurors to pick her up first thing as soon as our meeting is done,” said Fudge. “What else?”

“Immunity from the Ministry’s laws,” said Harry and Fudge raised his eyebrow at this. “I’m going to blunt, there might be some things that I need to do to defeat Voldemort that’s going to be outside the law. I don’t want the Ministry to arrest me on trumped up charges once I’ve ceased being useful for them.”

“Fine and the third thing?” asked Fudge, who thought it would be best to get Harry’s help and sort this out later.

“All of the intelligence about Voldemort and his followers and their activities that you get, is to come to me,” said Harry and Fudge looked at Harry, with a reluctant expression on his face. “But, I do here Azkaban is nice this time of year...”

“Fine Harry, you’ve got it, I swear on my magic that all three conditions will be met,” said Fudge and Harry looked at him with a nod of his head.

“Very good then Minister,” said Harry. “Now we need to plan how to best take the heat off of you and put it on Dumbledore...”

And that’s the sixth chapter. Took longer than I thought it would but it’s finally done. I’ve set up some things for the future and Harry is evolving from his pathetic canon self into something that I can stomach at what I feel is a respectable rate. If I had to guess, this story will be longer than Inverted but shorter than Aspirations. I know, this narrows it down, doesn’t it? :)



## Chapter Seven: Time Passes Us By

To say Albus Dumbledore had a better summer in the past would about sum everything up that had happened rather nicely. Recently, he had to deal with Harry finding out about the necessary steps that he had to take and thus all of his plans for the boy had been completely derailed, at least for the time being. The thing about this that frustrated Albus the most was that it was a complete coincidence that derailed everything and not anything that he could have foreseen. No one in their right mind would have seen the Greengrass girl having ran into Harry. Somehow, she convinced him to go along. Dumbledore had managed to keep Harry in line, but his magic was fighting the precautions every step of the way. Now Dumbledore was back to square one.

Not to mention the latest piece of news. Somehow Fudge had gotten out of trouble, albeit on extended probation and subject to constant evaluation by a neutral party. Harry had managed to say a few words, saying that Fudge could do better with a number chance and Dumbledore might have said that while Voldemort was back, he did not offer any information or tell Harry how he might be able to best prove his claims. The Wizengamot turned their ire to Dumbledore and it was not a pretty thing. Dumbledore was used to having his name dragged through the muck in the newspapers, it was nearly a yearly thing but to see Harry forget that Fudge tried to ruin his reputation as well last year.

Then again, once Dumbledore heard that Umbridge was now currently a guest at Azkaban prison, it did not take a genius to realize where Harry was coming. The boy had some cunning in him, but Dumbledore worked hard to suppress that nature. The hat very nearly ruined that all by putting Harry in Slytherin but thankfully Harry was conditioned to already hate Slytherins. Part of it was because of Hagrid, who was such an unwitting tool, innocent of anything, except being conditioned due to his loyalty to Dumbledore. Of course, Draco Malfoy putting a bad taste in Harry's mouth because of Slytherin was something that did not hurt either.

Still there was little to be done except try and find an alternative because Harry would not be able to take control of his own destiny.

They would all fail and there was only one alternative that Dumbledore could seek.

“Dumbledore, I’ve had it, that brat’s gone too far!” shouted Severus as he stormed into the Headmaster’s office immediately, without bothering to knock on the door, a crumpled up piece of parchment in his hand as he sat down in front of Dumbledore. Dumbledore just looked at Severus with a calm expression on his face.

“Good morning Severus, what can I do for you?” asked Dumbledore calmly.

“You should have expelled Potter years ago, this brat thinks he can just dictate things for my Potions class,” said Snape as he held up the parchment with shaking hands. “He says, I have to lower my entrance requirements to the NEWT level potions classes to an Exceeds Expectations level, due to students getting an improper opportunity to learn due to substandard and biased teaching methods and that I will be carefully monitored to ensure I teach up to the standards he wants for the Hogwarts education. I have half the mind to quit than let the spawn of James Potter dictate what I do...”

“It’s impossible for you to quit Severus and you know the reason,” said Dumbledore in a calm voice and Snape just looked back at the Headmaster, arms folded, with a sneer appearing on his face. “You have to remain in this school, it’s just much easier for us to regularly meet that way to discuss the details of your other job.”

“The Dark Lord has been very evasive on that front as of late, it’s almost like he suspects that I might be playing him as a double agent,” said Snape and Dumbledore just looked at Snape.

“Tom would have to die if he had any conclusive proof that you were deceiving him in any way, you helped lead him to a few Order members and lead to their unfortunate destruction,” said Dumbledore. “Regrettable, but necessary, it’s all necessary to bring Voldemort down and erase the stain of dark magic from the landscape.”

Snape just nodded. He refused to be naïve enough to believe that the Dark Lord’s destruction would lead to a better calmer world. All it

might cause is a power vacuum, as several sides jockeyed for power. Last time, they were caught off guard but now the Death Eaters had more time to make plans for the future, whatever future they had after this entire mess was done.

"Then there is Potter, we need to get him under control before he does something to ruin everything, his arrogance will be the downfall of us all," said Snape and at that point Dumbledore looked both thoughtful and rather frustrated, as he took a deep breath, before he turned his attention to Severus.

"Harry has shown himself to be more resourceful than I had hoped, with his short association with Miss Greengrass, the girl is leading him down a path that is unacceptable," said Dumbledore. "There will have to be steps taken before too long, as if nothing else, Mr. Potter has endeared himself to a great number of people. The number that joined that illegal Defense club of his last year despite the number that the Daily Prophet tried to do on his reputation was intriguing. It seems like his reputation can't be damaged for long."

"Perhaps people will steer clear of him when they find out he has been friendly with a Slytherin," said Snape in a slightly spiteful voice and Dumbledore just looked at him with a disapproving glance but he nodded his head.

"Most likely, but if I smear campaign in the greatest circulated Wizarding paper in the world did little to put a dent in Harry's reputation, then I doubt any alliance he has forged with Miss Greengrass will do anything, not to mention the fact he has the Minister on his side, Harry's gaining influence, I just hope it won't lead him down a dangerous path," said Dumbledore as he looked at the list that had come by the owl post this morning. "Now, changes that Mr. Potter has requested that I implemented..."

"Don't you mean the brat ordered you, Headmaster, under the threat of blackmail," grumbled Snape.

"Harry has control of Hogwarts, it's his right, although I would have preferred that he had not known he could exercise it," said Dumbledore but he sat down. A great many of these changes were

revolutionary to put it rightly and quite frankly radical. Harry also said that he would be making a speech where he would warn the school of how things would be from this point forward.

It was going to be a rather interesting year.

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"After all he did, Fudge is just getting off!" shouted Hermione angrily as she looked at the Daily Prophet, throwing it down as Ginny looked at it too, her eyes widening.

"What did Fudge do to convince Harry to help him?" demanded Ginny. "I can't believe he would have helped Fudge, after what he did, after putting that woman at Hogwarts last year, after he tried to ruin Harry's reputation and..."

"Look on the bright side, at least Umbridge is in Azkaban," said Ron as he tried to think of a good side to this story but it was baffling. Why did Harry help Fudge? Fudge was just a couple of days of being thrown out of office onto his arse, maybe sooner. Surely that is what Harry wanted. "Still don't get it, it seems like Harry is a completely different person..."

"That's what worries me, Harry seems to be obsessed with beating Voldemort," said Hermione as she bit her lip in worry. "I hope he isn't turning dark..."

"Harry wouldn't go that far, would he?" asked Ginny, as Ron and Hermione exchanged a look. Both of them looked indecisive at the possibility but there had been a distinct shift in Harry's personality. The few times they had come across him since that argument they had at Breakfast, he had been rather cold to the whole lot of them. "Some positive reinforcement would be nice..."

"I don't think he would, but I couldn't blame him if he did," said Ron in a hopeless voice. "Dumbledore pushed him to this..."

"Yes, but Harry could have turned the other cheek, not stoop to his or Voldemort's level and now..." said Hermione but she stopped, unable

to find the right words as there was a figure who snickered briefly and the trio spun around to see Astoria Greengrass standing in the hallway, having walked back towards her room with an amused expression on her face. "And what is it that's so amusing?"

"All of you are so hopeless naïve, it isn't even funny," said Astoria calmly. "Carry on, don't let me stop you from being ignorant, just good luck with the rest of your short lives."

Without another word, the girl turned as Ginny turned, clenching her fists together.

"That girl is almost as bad as her sister," said Ginny in an agitated voice.

"No one is as bad as her," said Hermione shortly.

"That wouldn't be because Greengrass beat you at Ancient Runes, would it?" asked Ron and Hermione just folded her arms and glared at Ron.

"She's not good for Harry, he wouldn't be on this path had it not been for her," said Hermione shortly and Ron just looked at her, before he just nodded, mostly out of habit. The path that it looked like Harry was taking was unfamiliar and uncomfortable but at the same time, he did wonder if it was something that Harry had to take because of the pure necessity of the situation.

No matter what, something that Ron knew would not be the same was the friendship between him, Harry, and Hermione. Hermione had many good points, but he had noticed that over this summer that Hermione had become petty and quite one dimensional in her opinions. Granted, Ron was amused by this as he had very little room to talk but still, Hermione relied a bit too much on what she thought to be true. It was just like the house elf thing, when she was convinced she was right about a situation, it was nearly impossible to change her mind.

Harry was in the room trying to send a simple stunning spell without the use of his wand towards a practice dummy that he had found up in the attic but so far, nothing. His wandless magic was rather hit and miss, he had been trained to use a wand and while he had thrived on doing the impossible, this was a bit trickier due to the Hogwarts education taking an ample amount of time in forcing the fact that he needed to use a wand in any aspect of magic. It would take time and Harry doubted he had any of that.

“STUPEFY!” shouted Harry and he had better success with vocalizing the spell but he wanted to do it silent and wandless as well. Hearing the spell gave an enemy proper time to counter. Back in the Department of Mysteries, when Dolohov hit Hermione with that that cut her, she had little warning. Sure, it was because Harry silenced the man but that just proved that losing his voice was not a handicap as it might have been for other people.

Harry looked at his wand, the tracking charms that Dumbledore placed on it still in place, for now. He was reading up on it and he knew he had the ability to break them, but finding the knowledge would be another matter entirely.

The door pushed open and Harry spun around, before he grabbed the figure coming through the door by the wrist with one hand while instinctively summoning his wand. He had his wand right between the eyes when he realized it was Daphne.

“Good reflexes Potter,” said Daphne in an approving voice. “Of course, using a better locking charm would have helped a lot. It only took me ten minutes to get it open.”

“If I put an alarm spell on the door, that would have been more than enough time for me to clear out,” said Harry, as he slightly relaxed his grip on the girl.

“True, providing I didn’t nullify any alarm spells,” said Daphne. “Just trying to keep you on your toes...”

"Next time, I'll just enchant the door so it curses someone's arm off when they try to open it without knocking," said Harry and Daphne looked at him with a nod.

"Not too bad of an idea, especially if it is one of those Weasleys or Granger," said Daphne as she looked at Harry. "Especially Granger, people like her are part of the reason why Muggleborns are hated by the blood supremacists..."

"What did she do now?" asked Harry calmly, as he sat down on a chair, taking a deep breath, practicing wandless magic was draining but he had to push himself above and beyond any limits.

"The fact she's flaunting her knowledge like she actually knows anything just because she read a few books that are beyond the recommended reading of Hogwarts," said Daphne coolly. "Hey, it's great that she's trying to be ambitious and working to better herself. As a Slytherin, I can appreciate that but she doesn't have to flaunt all of her knowledge."

"Hermione can get a bit too...overexcited about what she knows," said Harry and Daphne rolled her eyes.

"Understatement much, Harry?" asked Daphne in a calm voice. "I'm sure she thinks she's trying to impress some people but she's turning off more and more people by acting like an insufferable know it all, as Snape so often eloquently puts it. Purebloods might act arrogant, but we've lived the world and know how it works. People like Malfoy might just blindly hate her because of her blood, but if she was a pureblood with dozens of generations of ancestor going for her, I'd personally still want to smack her. And don't get me started on this stupid little crusade that she has for house elves."

"House elves, that reminds me, I have another loose end to tie up," said Harry, who had just forgotten about that filthy little abomination until Daphne had brought it up. "And you wouldn't be saying anything that I haven't already heard from Ron don't worry about it."

"Figure you wouldn't want to hear that," said Daphne. "But, your rant a few days ago told me that you really are considering doing what is

necessary and you talked about removing liabilities. Given her attitude, I'm afraid that Granger is the biggest liability that you might have and if I were you, I would cut ties as soon as possible."

"Not as easy as it might seem, I'm afraid," said Harry. "Besides, I want to give them all plenty of time to think and see things the way they need to be done."

"It's your choice and I think now that you've pulled your head out of Dumbledore's arse, you'll make the right one," said Daphne. "As for Granger and Weasley, everything will be much smoother when they shelve this foolish notion that they're equal to you and understand their role in this."

Daphne sat in the chair right next to Harry and looked him right in the eyes.

"They need you a lot more than you need them and that can go for the Wizarding World," said Daphne. "And the sooner they realize where they should stand, the better."

"And where do you stand in this?" asked Harry a bit sharply and Daphne just nodded, it was a reasonable question, he was becoming more assertive and less than a doormat.

"I stand on the side that's going to win," said Daphne. "And right now, I hope it's going to be you."

"I will win or die trying," stated Harry in a firm voice that left no room for argument.

"An answer that I was hoping to hear, but some people won't think you will go far enough to punish those who have wronged you and take the steps to win," said Daphne as she leaned a bit closer towards Harry, while lightly placing her hands on top of his as their legs brushed up against each other. "There comes a time where an example might need to be made to prove that you won't be walked over by anyone. Not your friends, not your enemies, not total strangers, not anyone."



Daphne pushed the chair backwards from Harry and walked from the door, leaving Harry a bit light headed but he shook his head, not showing the fact that she had gotten him flustered but once his head cleared slightly. It made perfect sense, in fact, he had made the connections already but there was still enough of a selfless Gryffindor to give his friends a chance, to show where their loyalties lied.

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Dinner was wrapping up. For the past few days, Harry had not joined them, preferring to barricade himself upstairs in his room. It drove Molly Weasley in particular up a wall to figure out how the poor boy was getting properly fed but she could not break down whatever barriers she put up there. Judging by the looks given by the older Greengrass girl, it was likely she knew how to get up there to visit Harry, but was not giving her any information. She shot disapproving looks to the two Slytherin girls, but said nothing. As much as she hated to admit it, Harry had the right to kick them out of this house and then they would be no place to go. While she hoped it would not come to that, Harry had been pushed too hard and there was one person to blame that. She had sent a howler to Dumbledore, doubting it would do her any good but it still gave her a chance to blow off some steam.

Right now, they were sitting around as it was about time for dessert, with Arthur Weasley joining them after a rare night off from work. The twins had promised to stop by once business stopped a bit for their shop. Bill and Charlie were still overseas, doing work for Dumbledore, and Percy still refused to admit he was wrong.

"I can't believe this!" shouted Hermione angrily as she had a chance to look at the booklist. "Harry hasn't given up this lunatic idea about not having any theory. No book in the list."

"Well he said that he wasn't going to," supplied Neville.

"He shouldn't be doing this, he is ruining the education of every student at Hogwarts, to prove some point," said Hermione in a low, deadly voice through gritted teeth.

“Hermione, it’s not the end of the world,” said Ginny, who actually was looking forward to learning a mostly practical class.

“Of course it is, Weasley,” said Daphne. “Books are the backbone of all of the great education. I mean you should remember how much we learned from Lockhart. The loads of useful information, like what brand of cologne he used or what his favorite food was. You-Know-Who is doomed with that great bit of knowledge.”

“Where has Harry been the last couple of days?” demanded Hermione as she turned to Daphne with an accusing look on her face. “I know you know.”

“Real tactful, Hermione,” muttered Ron underneath his breath.

“Practicing a new skill he picked up,” commented Daphne lightly.

“New skill?” asked Hermione in an interested voice, her irritation for Harry’s lack of interest towards the necessary component that was theory was outweighed by the desire of potentially learning something new.

“Oh, you mean Harry didn’t feel as if he needed to let you know,” said Daphne smugly, a small triumphant smirk appearing on her eyes. “I guess he feels you might not be able to handle it.”

Before Hermione could say anything, Harry calmly walked into the kitchen, as if he had not been hole up in the attic for the last couple of days. Dobby had made sure he was well fed so he had no reason to venture outside the attic.

“Hello Harry, decide to come out and join civilization,” said Neville as he looked at Harry but Hermione, Ron and Ginny all looked at him, with questions that they had.

“Yes, I figured I’d get out and stretch my legs, I trust you all got the booklists,” said Harry and they nodded, with Hermione still having a sour expression on her face. “And you see I’ve still stood by what I said. I’ve thought about it and my decision still stands.”

Hermione looked like she was going to argue this point but stopped herself. She was much more interested in what Harry was practicing than arguing the merits of theory.

"She said you were practicing some new skill that you discovered upstairs," said Hermione as Harry nodded. "What is it?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you, Hermione," said Harry.

"Harry, you can tell me, I've been in this world for five years, I've seen some unbelievable things, I'd love to help you research this, whatever it is," said Hermione and Harry looked at her.

"Wandless magic," said Harry and Hermione looked at him with a start, a frown appearing on her face.

"Harry, that's completely absurd, there is no such thing as wandless magic!" cried Hermione in a hysterical voice, unable to believe that Harry would try to disregard the most fundamental law of magical theory, that a wand was required to perform any piece of magic. "Unless you're talking about unrestrained accidental magic, but that's a different thing entirely and after the first year of Hogwarts, they teach us enough to control that."

"Don't you mean to restrict our potential," said Harry calmly and Hermione responded by staring at him as if he said something mortally offensive. "I've found out through Gringotts that I have a natural talent for wandless magic, don't know how, but I do. It's not through a Deum Ex Voldemort like most of my other magical abilities are. By using a wand, I restricted my potential and let's just say that you might have not been known as the best student of your year if I would have known this sooner."

"What are you trying to say?" demanded Hermione and Daphne looked like she was going to say something degrading towards Hermione and her lack of ability to learn beyond books but Harry decided it would be best to just cut her off. There would be enough fires to put out later as it was.

“Hermione, you have a great ability to find the most obscure knowledge in a book, your research ability is second to none and you can memorize more information than is required to pass an exam, a great skill for most classes at Hogwarts,” said Harry and Hermione had a proud smile on her face, as if she was satisfied. “An ability that is useless when you step out of the confines of the classroom into the real world, especially in a life and death situation. You need to learn how to think beyond what the Ministry approved theory is geared to. Otherwise, you will fail, just like you will fail in my class.”

“Still wandless magic is something that can’t be possible, you know Harry, that’s the first thing they teach us, that you need a wand,” argued Hermione.

“That’s what they want us to believe and it does serve a purpose up to an extent, because the Ministry can only track someone through the use of the wand, not through which person uses the wand, except when they use something like Dumbledore’s modified tracking spell,” said Harry before he took a breath, as if contemplating the situation at hand. “And that requires a powerful wizard, and I bet that only Voldemort, Dumbledore, and maybe, just maybe, myself could pull off such a measure.”

“Not to mention that it’s another way the Ministry can control Muggleborns,” said Daphne. “It can track where a wand is used, but not the person using.”

“Yeah, in a pureblood house, they expect the parents to punish the children for performing underage magic,” added Neville. “They can’t tell who’s really using it.”

“Wait a minute, you’re saying that we could have used magic over the holidays, and not gotten caught!” shouted Ginny in an angry voice as she turned to her parents.

“No, Ginny, you couldn’t have, you’re underage,” said Molly in a dangerous voice.

“No wonder the twins never got any warning letters,” muttered Ron.

"That's really unfair," said Hermione, her argument about wandless magic and the lack of probability of it being done forgotten for this new injustice.

"No, that's life Granger," said Astoria.

"Yes, purebloods don't want Muggleborns to be better than them," said Daphne as she looked at Hermione. "Therefore the laws are skewed..."

"That has been one of the faults of the underage tracking system," said Arthur, speaking up for the first time. "Especially since most families will just let their children practice, to have bragging rights when their children have better grades, but technically, it is the responsibility of the parents to enforce it."

"Wandless magic is something I can do," said Harry, who decided to steer the subject back. "Something the Ministry frowns upon, isn't that right Mr. Weasley?"

"Correct Harry, they do, many consider it to be a dark art, only if something they can't regulate," explained Arthur. "The problem is they can't officially call it illegal, because they would be admitting that it's something that can be done."

"Exactly and that would be an endorsement for people to try and learn it, it's better to do subtle control through rudimentary magical theory," said Harry in a defiant voice but Hermione still looked less than convinced. "Look Hermione, open up your mind, you'd be surprised what you might accomplish once in a while. Last year, you couldn't wait to learn the practical when Umbridge graced us with her presence."

"That was because there was no practical, only theory, now you're going to the other extreme," said Hermione harshly but Harry just looked amused.

"Feel free to learn things your way Hermione, but I doubt you'll get very far," said Harry crisply as he sat down, as the others looked at him. "I'm not going to debate the merits of wandless magic or the

probability of it being done any longer, just know that I've been able to do a few simple charms, and I'm working on the shield spell and the stunning spell. If I lose my wand, it might be a trick to help save my life. That's that and that's all I'm saying."

Harry paused for a moment.

"Now, onto more pressing business, as the Head of the House of Black I have certain duties and obligations to punish the vermin that commit crimes," said Harry, as his voice raised slightly, as he got more emotional, an intense look on his face. "Bellatrix, she'll get hers soon or later, along with the rest of Voldemort's followers but there is one that deserves to be punished. Kreacher, come forward."

With a pop, a filthy house elf appeared, as he looked at Harry with contempt in his eyes.

"So the brat of the blood traitor and a Mudblood decides to finally call on Kreacher, what does he want?" asked Kreacher.

"To make you realize that the role you played in Sirius's death will never be forgiven and will be punished," said Harry.

"Harry, please no, he's touched in the head, he didn't know what he was doing, please you don't need to do this," begged Hermione but Harry turned to her. It was a look of pure rage and loathing, that caused the Weasleys to slide back in their chairs. They decided it was best not to say a word. "Harry, it's just how he was brought up, you can't..."

"I don't know why you're upset, Hermione, I'm going to give him the treatment that you want for all house elves," said Harry and Hermione looked at him with a confused stare. "I'm going to make sure that he never is used for slave labour ever again."

"For a second, I thought you were going to hurt him back, thank you Harry, hopefully more will follow your lead," said Hermione but Harry ignored her glowing words of praise.

"Harry, don't, he knows too much about the Order!" shouted Molly in a panicked voice but Harry turned to her.

"You're right Mrs. Weasley he does, he knows more about what goes on in those meetings than I do," said Harry in an icy tone of voice. "Kreacher, you've befouled the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black With Your Actions."

"Please don't give Kreacher clothes," said Kreacher in an unconvincing voice but Harry just nod.

"Alright Kreacher, I won't give you clothes," said Harry. "I order you to never use your magic to help another witch or wizard again as long as you live. From this moment on, you're forbidden to serve anyone."

Kreacher's eyes widened like tennis balls as Hermione wondered why most of the other occupants in the room had their eyes widened.

"What did you just do Harry?" muttered Ginny in a horrified tone of voice.

"What do you mean Ginny?" asked Hermione. "He freed Kreacher, even though he didn't have to. That's..."

"You have no idea what he just did," piped up Astoria and Daphne looked highly amused at this.

"He just condemned him to death," said Daphne and Hermione looked at her with a confused look. "House elves need to serve another human to live and be happy. Otherwise, it will slowly kill them."

"What about Dobby?" asked Hermione. "He's been free for years..."

"It's different with house elves who have been freed from their family obligations, the death is slower and they have years before they have to find a new family to serve," interrupted Daphne as if she was explaining basic arithmetic to a mentally challenged child.

“But Harry freed him,” argued Hermione but she watched as Kreacher clutched his hands to his chest, breathing heavily, his organs were expanding from the build up of magic.

“No he didn’t, he ordered him never to serve another, without freeing him,” argued Neville and Hermione turned to Harry, horrified.

“I found a book in my research, was enlightening, gave me quite a bit of insight on pureblood culture and also the master-servant bond between a family and their house elf,” stated Harry as he looked at them. “Of course, I don’t know everything based on one book but when I read about the fact I had the right to do this, it just seemed perfect.”

Kreacher gave a blood curdling shriek as his body expanded. Hermione and the others watched in order as blood oozed from every opening in his body. After a minute of this, Hermione put a hand over her mouth, feeling slightly ill.

“Don’t go yet Granger, you’re miss the best part,” stated Daphne smugly. “You know, you wanted house elves to be free and this was what was bound to happen if by some miracle your little crusade was successful...”

Hermione pushed past Daphne and burst through the door, heading towards the nearest bathroom as Kreacher’s body combusted into a shower of blood and pieces of internal organs.

“Harry, how could you?” asked Ginny who was near tears at what she had just seen Harry do and he did not seem at that remorseful.

“Yeah, Harry, that seemed a bit cold,” said Ron tentatively and both of the Weasley parents looked shocked beyond words. Neville had a neutral look on his face and Astoria and Daphne looked like they had understood why Harry did, even if it was a bit harsh.

“Yes, I suppose I should have let Kreacher get away with the role he played in Sirius’s dead, but providing I forget that, he still betrayed the previous head of house and it’s one of my duties to rectify that matter,” said Harry in a calm voice as he cleaned up Kreacher’s



remains. "I'm not going to put up with anyone who decides to get in my way with what needs to be done and I'm sure as hell not going to put up with a house elf who deserved everything he got."

"Harry, surely there was another way..." argued Ron logically, not really wanting to accuse Harry, but he surely preferred that Harry would take another step.

"If there was an easier solution, I'm sure Harry would have figured it out by now," stated Neville calmly as Harry looked at them.

"Ron, if you're not going to have the stomach for this, what makes you think you're going to have the stomach to deal with Death Eaters?" asked Harry calmly. "And I don't mean deal with them, as in using stunning spells and full body binds before they are tossed in the revolving door prison that is Azkaban, I mean deal with them."

Harry turned to walk off leaving the others in the kitchen, leaving the others to talk about whatever they pleased. He decided to go into his room and try the long and laborious process of undoing five years of Hogwarts education and trying to perfect wandless magic. He was trying a bit with his Occlumency as well but Snape had done a fair bit of damage from his crude teaching techniques.

In the end his greatest enemy was not Voldemort and that would prove to be a frustrating mountain to overcome in itself. Rather it was overcoming the absurdly backwards and outdated thinking in the Wizarding World. He picked up the Daily Prophet from today, detailing an escape from Azkaban of twenty of Voldemort's most feared Death Eaters, including some not so fearsome Death Eaters mixed in their for variety. Harry looked agitated; there was a difference between giving someone a chance to pay their debt to society and being a complete trusting fool. By taking that dark mark, the Death Eaters had erased any chance that they would ever have sympathy from him.

People would not understand what he had to do, but if those people did not wise up, they were part of the problem and thus needed to be dealt with like the rest of them. Dumbledore decided to manipulate circumstances using his power and influence, but he never truly went

all the way with what needed to be done. And thus, they were in the situation they were with Voldemort.

It might be an effort that was in vain but total and utter control over everything was the only way that Harry thought he had a hope of defeating Voldemort. It was for the good of the magical community, not just in Britain, but the entire world.

He had a lot of work to do in the last couple of weeks before Hogwarts began.

Chapter Seven has been completed and the ball is set into motion for the next year at Hogwarts and perhaps the future. Would have been sooner, but I was struck ill and had to recover from that, before I could get going. Plus writing this story was also giving me a bit of unnecessary stress for a bit, I had to step back, take a deep breath, and remind myself this is a hobby and no way serious business.

Next Chapter, Voldemort's scheming, some mindless humor, and the train ride to Hogwarts. All kinds of fun and joy and random wackiness and snarky banter and whatever else I feel that I need to write.

## Chapter Eight: September First is Trash Day

Three hooded figures appeared outside of a hotel in one of the sleaziest, most run down parts of London. One of them, a certain gentleman by the name of Lucius Malfoy, recent escapee of Azkaban prison, turned his nose up in the air at the smell of urine as his two companions, Crabbe and Goyle gagged as they tried to adjust themselves.

“Are you sure this is the place?” asked Crabbe dully.

“Yes, Crabbe this is the place,” said Lucius in a calm tired voice, as he looked at the hotel. It looked foul, it was not even fit for a Weasley to live in.

“Yes, the Lovegood girl and her father are staying in that hotel for tonight after their trip to Sweden, they’re going to return home tomorrow, we need to sneak inside, grab the girl, kill the father, take the girl to the Dark Lord, have him find out what she knows about Potter, and then he can kill her as he pleases,” recited Goyle happily and Lucius looked at Goyle like he had lost his mind.

“Why are you telling us this, Goyle?” asked Lucius. “We already know of this mission, we were all there when the Dark Lord gave it to us.”

“I just like talking about the plans of a mission I’m involved in out loud, it makes me feel important,” said Goyle with a shrug as Lucius lifted up his fancy walking stick and roughly tapped Goyle across the back of the head, causing him to stagger.

“Don’t do it, it’s annoying and can be overheard,” said Lucius as they walked forward towards the hotel, Goyle clutching the back of his head, staggering around, looking rather punch drunk.

“I don’t think you should have hit him so hard, you could have given him brain damage or something,” said Crabbe but Lucius looked at him with narrowed eyes.

“There’s nothing to damage,” said Lucius coldly as he looked at the hotel doors. Muggles were such fools, leaving their doors unlocked.

Not that it mattered, because a simple unlocking charm and they were good to go. Lucius nudged the door opened and motioned for his two associates to follow him inside. Lucius looked. "Don't tell me those Muggles are so barbaric that they don't know how to build a set of stairs."

"Actually I believe you're supposed to go up through here," said Goyle helpfully, as he pointed towards a set of doors and Lucius turned around, eyes narrowed, as Goyle pressed a button, opening up the doors and beckoning them to step inside. Lucius and Crabbe followed calmly. "It's called a lift, it is a Muggle device to get from one floor to the next in a building."

"And how do you know that, Goyle?" asked Crabbe dangerously, wand held close to Goyle's throat. "Don't tell me we're going to need to have you burned as a Muggle lover."

"I took Muggle Studies at Hogwarts," responded Goyle as Lucius and Crabbe looked at him with nasty glares. "I happen to enjoy studying the behaviors of less advanced species, nothing more, nothing less. It's no different then taking Care of Magical Creatures."

"Fair enough," said Lucius but his eyes looked at Goyle in a somewhat accusing manner, but decided since he did not know this contraption. "Operate it Goyle, have a chance to be the expert at something for once in your life."

Goyle beamed, as he moved over and began to press the button to the third floor, where there intelligence had tracked the Lovegood girl to staying. The lift moved slowly up towards the intended floor and as they moved, Crabbe started moving back and forth, humming which got him strange looks from both Lucius and Goyle.

"Oh come and stir my cauldron and if you do it right, I'll boil you some hot strong love, to keep you warm tonight," sang Crabbe very badly and off key as he noticed Lucius and Goyle looking at him. "What?"

Lucius just responded by hitting Crabbe over the head with the fancy walking stick, causing him to slump against the wall, dazed and

confused. The trio waited as the doors slid open as they had finally reached the third floor.

“Here, at last,” said Lucius triumphantly but Goyle looked at him strangely. “What is it Goyle?”

“You know, we’re wizards, right,” said Goyle and Lucius nodded slowly. “Couldn’t we have Apparated onto the third floor?”

Lucius looked at Goyle for a few seconds after he had pointed out this gap of logic before he violently whacked Goyle right on the forehead with the walking stick. Goyle was staggered, as Lucius turned, before he saw a sign on the floor, his lip curling in a sneer as he read it.

“Slippery when wet,” read Lucius.

“Sounds like my wife,” said Crabbe and with that statement, he exchanged a jumping high five with Goyle or at least in theory, as they missed their target, before they landed on the ground, stunned and quite disoriented as Lucius looked at them disapprovingly as they tried to find their way back to their feet.

“Will you two stop acting like inebriated Muggle teenagers for just one minute and focus?” demanded Lucius in an irritated voice, as he threatened them with their walking stick. “The Lovegood girl is on the third door to the left. Draco has informed me the girl is not a threat and rather harmless, always babbling about some ridiculous magical creatures. You two are to go and grab her. Can you do that?”

“Absolutely, Malfoy, we won’t let you down,” said Crabbe and Lucius gave them a look, as the two moved their way, before their feet slipped out from underneath them, causing them to land on the floor with a loud thud, causing Lucius to raise his palm up to his face slowly and look at the two morons on the ground.

“You imbeciles, get up and grab the girl and don’t fail me, the Dark Lord wants her alive, kill her father and anyone else who gets in your way,” said Lucius as he raised his walking stick, which caused Crabbe and Goyle to stagger to their feet, slipping and sliding as they

made their way to take do the task. The two walked over towards the door Lucius indicated and exchanged looks, as Goyle raised his wand, preparing to open the door but Crabbe had a concern.

“Look, I know what Lucius said, but we should be careful,” said Crabbe. “The girl was part of that group that Potter brought for a reason, I don’t care if Lucius’s brat says she’s harmless or not...”

“Just grab the girl, kill the father, and get out,” stated Goyle as he raised his wand. He liked to keep things simple. He was after all a simple man and he had raised his wand and the door clicked open. The two men entered the room, looking around. The room appeared to be vacated, as they looked around. “The girl just has to be here, I don’t think she could have gone far...”

“Unless she and her father had left soon,” said Crabbe as he shuddered, he did not even want to know what that smell was and he was a reasonably iron stomached man, who was used to the foul and the redundant. They looked around, and given the additions of the Quibbler lying around and a number of odd things, they knew they were still here. They moved around, looking around, just passing the time and they heard footsteps outside of the door, which caused Crabbe and Goyle to tense as the footsteps got closer.

“Only if you can house break it, Luna,” said the voice of Xenophilius Lovegood as he approached the room. “I thought for sure we would find the muckflast, the conditions of this Muggle hotel are a perfect breeding ground for it but I guess we’re going to have to go home empty handed today.”

“I guess I’m going to have to live,” said Luna as the door opened and Crabbe and Goyle stood there, wands held, as they looked at the Lovegoods, with a serious look on their faces.

“Ah, you must be room service, I’m sorry to tell you, but we have to clear out, I’ve got an edition of the Quibbler that has to get out to newsstands in two days and then Luna has to get her supplies for her trip at Hogwarts, I wonder if anything strange and exciting that happened but I’m sure it ‘s just the same old stagnant education, but it’s always enlightening to find out the new ways that the Ministry can

close their mind to new experience,” said Xenophillius without taking a breath, bouncing up on his heels as he looked at Crabbe and Goyle, who held their wands right at the elder Lovegood.

“I’m afraid your mistaken, we’re here to kill you and kidnap your daughter for the Dark Lord,” said Goyle in a threatening voice.

“Oh is that all?” asked Luna calmly. “Well good luck with that. I doubt you’d succeed but do keep trying.”

“Just surrender your wands and we might make this quick and painless,” warned Crabbe as Luna just rolled her eyes which prompted Crabbe to raise his wand. He conjured a flock of birds, with sharp beaks and claws. Crabbe motioned for the birds. “Last warning, Lovegood, surrender peacefully.”

Luna just responded by humming underneath her breath and Xenophillius looked amused.

“Forgive me if I’m not too threatened about a group who got their...pardon my French...arses handed to them by six teenagers,” said Xenophillius in a calm voice and this caused Goyle to swallow, before he motioned to Crabbe, who motioned his conjured flock of birds through the two Lovegoods and time seemed to stand still as he positioned them perfectly for the attack.

“ATTACK!” shouted Crabbe and the flock of birds turned, before they attacked Crabbe and Goyle. The two wizards screamed, as the beaks and claws pecked and ripped at the flesh of Crabbe and Goyle, causing the two Death Eaters to stagger down the hallway, blood splattering to the floor as their skin was ripped, as they moved through the doors.

Once they were gone for a few seconds, Xenophillius turned to his daughter.

“I think we best head home, before they send someone competent comes by,” said Xenophillius calmly and Luna responded with a nod, as Xenophillius gathered up their things with a flick of his wand and

grabbed the Portkey. "Touch it Luna, you know how much I hate getting disorganized."

"I know, Daddy," said Luna happily, as they made their way to home, the last noise they heard were the blood curdling shrieks from outside the hallway and the sounds of ripping flesh from outside of the hallway.

Lucius stood outside of the entrance to the lift, tapping his foot on the hallway floor, as he looked down the hall.

"Those two should have been successful by now, if they didn't screw it up," muttered Lucius under his breath and as if right on cue, Crabbe and Goyle rushed down the hallway, shielding their faces, as the birds attacked them.

"Don't just stand there, Malfoy, help us!" shouted Crabbe as one of the birds dove and tried to take one of his fingers off and Lucius just stood there, leaning on his stylish walking stick, tapping it against the ground. He watched as the birds continued to attack their prey.

"Just one moment," said Lucius, who was enjoying the show, especially considering these two failed. The Dark Lord would not allow him to take more able wands on this mission, but he did get some level of amusement. It would help make up for the punishment the Dark Lord would give them. Crabbe and Goyle slumped against the wall, as the birds circled around them, ready to move in for the kill, before Lucius stepped forward and flicked his wand. The birds disappeared in a puff of dust. "You failed, didn't you?"

"Yes, Malfoy, we failed, the girl was too cunning for us, she managed to turn our own attack against us," said Crabbe but Goyle elbowed him stiffly in the chest.

"Actually this genius here, when he conjured a flock of vicious birds, he didn't specify who they should attack and they attacked us," said Goyle and Lucius looked at both of them, angered beyond words before he roughly whacked them both with the walking stick across the shins, causing them to slump against the wall.



“Dunderheads, how hard is it to capture one spacey girl and kill her equally insane father,” grumbled Lucius. “I should have hired mountain trolls, at least they wouldn’t be this incompetent and they might actually get the job done better than these two dunces.”

Lucius opened the door but as he looked around, it was seen that Crabbe and Goyle had allowed them to get away. He held up his wand, before taking out his frustrations on a table, blasting it into toothpicks. It was not something that was dignified for a head of a respected pureblood family but he was at his wit’s end with those two. He turned, taking a deep breath, mentally counting to a hundred, before he turned and walked outside, where Crabbe and Goyle nursed their wounds outside. Lucius stared them down as the two wizards cowered against the wall and Lucius took a few more breaths, before he calmly decided to tell them the results.

“They left thanks to your bungling, the Dark Lord will not be pleased, we only managed to capture Longbottom and even he got away,” said Lucius as he turned towards Crabbe and Goyle, who imagined the Dark Lord’s reaction to this failure and the images that flashed through their brains of what had been concocted had been pretty grim to say the very least and they moved, this time Disapparating like wizards, although in hindsight it might have been best to travel the Muggle way.

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It was almost two days before Hogwarts was to return but Harry refused to let up on his work even for a moment. He had right in front of him lesson plans from not only Defense Against the Dark Arts, but all of the other classes at Hogwarts. He would give Hogwarts this, they were more advanced than most of the magical schools around the world today but compared to how they were with in the past, they were woefully out of touch. The curriculum at Hogwarts was so unbalanced it was not even funny and what was worse, any decisions made to tweak it were made by the Board of Governors. A group that was more concerned about making sure not to offend the delicate sensibilities of the children, then there were actually learning magic and preparing them for the real world, outside of Hogwarts. Harry could care less about that. If some child wanted to cry home to

Mummy and Daddy that was there problem and they were only hurting themselves. Given his status as the owner of Hogwarts and thanks to the agreements the Ministry broke, he was the undisputed party that would make all decisions. And the glorious thing about that was that no other schools could be established within the United Kingdom area.

Right now, Harry put the finishing touches on Potions. He briefly thought about making Snape teach the subject dressed in a chicken suit, but he decided to put petty revenge aside for the moment. However, he would make Snape actually teach the subject. It was amazing, he had found out some of Snape's accomplishments and the man did know his Potions. If he had spent half as much time explaining the subject as he did making snide remarks, he might be one of the best teachers Hogwarts had ever seen. The main problem was not his lack of knowledge but his personality and not being someone who mixed well with children. He might not be a good teacher strictly speaking, but he was a knowledgeable asset that Harry looked to exploit for his own benefit.

A part of Harry felt he had been down this road a hundred times for some reasons although he could not imagine why. For all he knew, there were an infinite number of universes out there and many of the Harrys took similar steps to their thought process. It was common sense after all.

"Yes, Daphne, please come in," said Harry from outside and the door swung open on its own accord, as Daphne came in, looking at Harry's notes with mild interest, before she sat down on the bed right next to Harry, looking at his work more closely. "What do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"First of all, how did you know it was me?" asked Daphne and Harry just smirked.

"As a Slytherin, you might appreciate the fact that it wouldn't be a good idea for me to reveal the secrets behind my success," said Harry and Daphne just sat on the bed, with her arms folded, as she looked at Harry. "Let's just say I'm experimenting with a few different

charms and testing their limitations and trying to break what is believed to be possible.”

“Everyone is still in an uproar after what you did to that house elf,” said Daphne and Harry nodded, as if he was not surprised. “Granger is convinced that Black’s death did something to your mind and of course, she blames me...”

“That’s nice, Hermione trying to psychoanalyze something she could never hope to understand ever again,” said Harry. “As for Sirius, I’ve moved on from that. I was saddened but there’s little to be done. No amount of moping is going to bring him back.”

“Yes, the Weasley parents are arguing back and forth, the banshee thinks that someone should be keeping an eye on you, you might be mentally unbalanced and her husband, the sane, level headed one that he is, says you were only exercising your responsibility as the Head of the Black family,” said Daphne and Harry nodded. Arthur always seemed to be level headed, how he remained so after years of being married to Molly remained a mystery. Harry imagined he had a secret stash of calming draughts somewhere that was the only logical explanation that he could think of. “Longbottom thinks it might have been a little harsh but understands that you had to do this and naturally Astoria and I are behind you. As for the other two mini-Weasels, who knows. They might support you but I don’t see them going too far.”

“Ron seems a bit rational this summer,” said Harry before adding jokingly. “Maybe those brains in the Department of Mysteries that attacked him managed to suffocate some sense into him.”

“Maybe,” said Daphne in a skeptical voice, she had no idea what Harry was talking about but in fact she did not want to know. “I wouldn’t know anything about how they might have affected Weasley.”

“Figures, we’ll wait and see, I don’t want any of them to ruin what needs to be done,” said Harry. “It’s going to be a tough battle to get people to agree...”

“Of course it is, you’re trying to turn the entire magical community on its head but I think there are only two people who might be able to inspire such a sweeping change or try to stop it,” said Daphne. “You and Dumbledore and I think since you’ve backed him into a corner, Dumbledore won’t want certain things to come out...”

“No,” said Harry. “He won’t and neither will the Minister...”

“Ah covering all of your bases, very clever of you,” stated Daphne. “Very clever of you Harry, I’m impressed.”

“Nice that I meet your lofty standards,” said Harry dryly as he continued to make some more notes, appalled about how lopsided it was. Transfiguration and Charms had similar concerns but nowhere near as bad as Potions.

Daphne sat there, watching Harry, not saying a word. At first, he was nothing more than an arrogant Gryffindor, with a hot headed temper but now it was amazing how calculating he could be. It was like he had that potential all the time, it was a matter of unlocking it and Daphne was proud about the small role she played but really all she gave Harry was a nudge or two in the right the direction. He took the chance and moved the rest of the way towards the role someone of his stature should have and he took it beyond her wildest expectations. He was still selfless at some instances, but unwilling to forgive with many others. To a certain point, Daphne could see why Harry would want to give his so called friends a chance to see the light, but she felt that trying to get them to see things properly would be more trouble than it’s worth. Granger and Weasley would follow Potter to a certain extent but they would fold once he asked something much more serious of them.

The fact that he was not entirely like the average self important male pureblood heir was a nice bonus. He was beginning to be assertive and he might have to act a bit arrogant to get people to listen him, but at the some time he was not a conceited bastard who hid behind his family name. Not pale and pudgy like most purebloods who had relied on their money to get a woman with the express purpose of conceiving an heir and used glamour charms to make them look as if they’re attractive.

Of course, Daphne had never been one of those vapid little girls to that had a crush on the Boy-Who-Lived. Perhaps it was just her, but having a crush on a fictional character was absolutely stupid. Still, the real Harry Potter was of interest to her and the fact that he was rather easy on the eyes helped not that mattered.

Okay, maybe it mattered, just a little bit, but still Daphne had encountered plenty of people who were in fact rather good looking, but were complete and utter jerks. There were three types of purebloods. The real purebloods, the blood traitors, and the people who acted like worst stereotype of a pureblood, not worrying about the actual responsibilities, but rather the money and the power. That last group might even be even worse than the blood traitors and that was saying something.

The definition of what a blood traitor was had been so skewed and mutilated over the years that no one really was sure what it meant anymore anyway. So that group might in fact be the original intended definition of blood traitors.

"Is there anything else that I can help you with Daphne?" asked Harry calmly, which broke her concentration. She had been sitting there for about ten minutes, deep in thought and Harry just happened to be sitting in the way of the direction that she was staring. Of course, a simpler mind might have put together the fact that she was staring at Harry.

"No just thinking about pureblood politics, it's enough to make your head throb in agony," said Daphne quickly. "Nasty stuff too..."

"So I've read and experienced with the Minister of Magic," said Harry as he continued to make some notes. He wanted to make it so magical children living in Muggle homes would be required to start Hogwarts a year earlier, to get oriented into the Wizarding World and make the descent into the strange world much simpler. Harry knew personally that he would have had much fewer headaches if he had not been thrown in headfirst sight unseen.

Of course thanks to Dumbledore's meddling, he would not have found too much interest in these things, but that was beside the point.

"Astoria and I are going out for our Hogwarts supplies right now, if you want to join us feel free," said Daphne calmly.

"After the last time I went shopping with you, I think I'll pass," stated Harry but then a concern appeared on his face. "You don't have any money..."

"The gold that I made that I intended to barter for my parents and Astoria would be more than enough," said Daphne. "I got about a quarter of the gold needed and believe me, when you know how much of it Father squandered, that's a sufficient amount of gold. I won't be living like a Malfoy but at least I won't be living like a Weasley."

"Daphne, I know you're in there, I need to talk to you, that woman's driving me mad!" shouted Astoria suddenly from outside and Harry flicked his wand, letting down the barrier long enough for Astoria to slip inside. "That damn woman thinks she's in control of the house...she says we can't go to Diagon Alley without adult supervision, because it might too dangerous...."

"Guess I'm going to have to come with you after all," said Harry suddenly and Daphne looked at him. "By Wizarding law I'm considered an adult..."

"Something tells me that's not what the Human Howler had in mind," said Daphne but Harry shrugged it off. He feared very few things and Molly Weasley was not one of them. He walked from the room, with Daphne and Astoria walking aside from him as Molly was caught off guard.

"Harry, thank goodness, they're your guests," remarked Molly but she looked rather disapproving at their presence. "Please try and talk some sense into them, tell them they have to wait for an adult to escort them to Diagon Alley, so they can be properly supervised. The Order is shorthanded but we've planned to..."

“Mrs. Weasley, I happen to agree with you, they should have adult supervision,” stated Harry and Molly looked surprised, but then pleased that Harry was not arguing with her. “That’s why I’m going to tag along...”

“Harry, there should be a real adult, not someone who is an adult by an ancient magical law technicality,” argued Molly but Harry looked at her, eyes narrowed. It was a cold, lifeless glare.

“And how many of these adults have survived five battles with Voldemort?” asked Harry and Molly opened her mouth to protest. “I thank you for your suggestion but that’s all it’s going to be. Let’s not forget you’re a guest in my house as well and as soon as I have the Burrow rebuilt and it’s protections improved, you’ll be sent back. Not to mention the fact that Dumbledore’s being evasive, going out of his way to not hold any Order meetings and thus give me the information that I need...”

“Harry, Professor Dumbledore’s saying that there isn’t much information, You-Know-Who is quiet,” said Molly who was trying hard not to lose her temper but Harry looked at her with a disapproving look. “No one in the Order knows much of what’s going on...”

“Obviously, you have a spy right in his Inner Circle, so of course you wouldn’t have any vital information that might be helpful, that is, if Snape isn’t playing both sides for fools, wouldn’t think the man would have a sense humor, but you never know anymore,” stated Harry and Molly opened her mouth to protest, but found no sound coming out. “I thank you for your suggestion, Mrs. Weasley, but even if I wasn’t an adult, you’re still not my guardian and have no say whatsoever of my plans. Not you, not Dumbledore, not anyone in the Order of the Phoenix. The only person who I would have listened to died a couple of months ago.”

Molly turned trying to say something but once again she could not speak.

“Wandless silencing charm looks to be good,” remarked Daphne.

"I don't know how long it will last," said Harry and Astoria looked at Molly, as she tried to reach for her wand and remove the charm but since Harry was more powerful than her, this worked as well as it could be expected.

"Well then let's go before the Human Howler regains her super human abilities," said Astoria as Harry and the two girls made their way for a shopping trip that would turn out without any incident of note and thus was nothing worth noting.

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Lord Voldemort turned, as he looked at his Death Eaters, staring them down from a podium deep underneath Azkaban prison. It was a forgotten part of the prison, that the Ministry kept using centuries ago but Lord Voldemort felt that no part of magical history should be overlooked, especially if it was a meeting place, one that the Death Eaters inside and outside of Azkaban could meet easily.

"Good evening my children, we are on the eve where the magical children of this country and many others return to Hogwarts," hissed Voldemort as he looked at his followers, some of the most vicious and blood thirsty witches and wizards in not only Magical Britain, but the entire world standing before them. "Mudbloods, half bloods, blood traitors, and purebloods all alike return, to the blanket of safety, of that old fool Albus Dumbledore. They think they are beyond our reach, for the moment that they get on the train."

Voldemort paused, for dramatic effect, as his followers drank in every word he said.

"They are mistaken," said Voldemort softly as he looked at his followers. "Thanks to the blundering of my Inner Circle, some think of us as something to not be feared but the Wizarding World will learn that they need to fear Lord Voldemort. Lord Voldemort has a plan that will recapture that fear with us. We will attack the Hogwarts Express and slaughter the blood traitors and Mudbloods on board, to prove that Lord Voldemort is one to be feared by the Wizarding World."



“Wait a minute, you want us to attack the Hogwarts Express?” asked a young Death Eater by the name of Klea Shae. “That isn’t a very original idea...”

“CRUCIO!” hissed Voldemort and the young Death Eater was on the ground, screaming in absolute agony.

“Torturing your followers isn’t very original either,” rasped Klea Shae and Voldemort just intensified the curse, causing the young man to scream out loud.

“Does anyone else wish to question Lord Voldemort’s lack of originality?” asked Voldemort with a deadly whisper and the Death Eaters shook their heads frantically. “Lord Voldemort thought not. Now prepare, as we will intercept the train at this point...”

Voldemort waved his wand conjuring a giant map with a giant red “X” marking the location where he wanted his Death Eaters to intercept the Hogwarts Express. It was blinking, so not even the densest of his followers would not be able to miss where he wanted them to strike.

“But how are we to stop the train?” asked one of the Death Eaters.

“Summon the giants,” hissed Voldemort and several of his Death Eaters gulped in absolute fear. “There is little time to waste. Lord Voldemort dismisses you.”

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The trip to the Hogwarts Express was a rather uneventful little trip, unless one would count the Order of the Phoenix guard that Dumbledore so generously provided. The fact remained that they hindered the trip to King’s Cross more than helped. Arthur Weasley, the voice of reason that he was, had tried to pacify Harry, by saying the guard was more for the others than him but naturally they stuck close to Harry. It was very annoying.

“I can tell that if you had to have a guard, it would be someone that you couldn’t easily wipe the floor with in a duel,” said Daphne as she

looked around. "Remind me again how this lot got into the so called elite Order of the Phoenix."

"Loyalty to Dumbledore?" suggested Neville.

"Explains everything quite frankly," said Harry, as he walked onto the train, brushing past his so called guard, making his way on the train, levitating the trunks onto the train. He could care less whether or not any Muggles had seen them using magic on the platform. They would not be in this position if their guard had not made them wait until the last minute.

"Two minutes to go, I'm guessing this is a recurring thing for you," said Astoria.

"With the Weasleys, being on time doesn't seem to be a strong point for them," said Harry, as he set their trunks down in the first compartment they reached. He saw Hermione, Ginny, and Ron moving, looking very annoyed with the fact that Harry had went behind them. "Guess they wanted to talk to me..."

"Well ever since you took care of that house elf, you have been upstairs most of the time," commented Neville lightly and Harry nodded, before they saw a very familiar face in the hallway. "Hello Luna."

"Hi Luna," added Harry.

"Hi, Neville, Harry," said Luna with her usual dreamy expression on her face as she looked at them, before she turned to the two Greengrass sisters. "I'm afraid I haven't had the pleasure."

"Daphne Greengrass and this is my sister Astoria," stated Daphne in stoic politeness as she looked at Luna before she nodded.

"So how was your summer Luna?" asked Harry.

"Pretty boring, a couple of Death Eaters when after me and my father a few days ago," said Luna and this caused Neville and Harry to look at her strangely. "I wouldn't worry about it, they weren't that

dangerous and we got away safely. I might tell you the details later but there isn't that much to say."

Neville just turned with Luna walking and Astoria followed with a nod from Daphne, as Ginny, Hermione, and Ron had just boarded the train. Daphne and Harry began walking, as Harry turned to her.

"Luna's a bit odd, I do admit that," said Harry and Daphne responded with a nod.

"Yes, she might be odd, but she is one of the smartest students in her year and doesn't actually flaunt her knowledge like Granger does, an added bonus as well," said Daphne as they walked into the compartment, where Ginny followed them.

"Ron and Hermione will be here right after their prefect meeting, they both want to talk to you," said Ginny as her eyes averted towards Daphne. "In private as well..."

"They can talk to me if they wish, but I won't be listening to anything that they say unless I feel it's of value," stated Harry in a crisp voice. "And they can talk to me in a public place, if they wish to talk to me at all."

"They don't want to tell you this in front of her," muttered Ginny.

"It's nice when people talk about you like you're not in the room," said Daphne in a light voice.

"Unless they're willing to listen to me, then I'm not willing to listen to either of them, as I told all of you, they need to think long and hard of where their loyalties lie," warned Harry once again as Ginny looked supremely frustrated. "I don't want to have to worry about any liabilities when I fight out there."

"We helped you in the Department of Mysteries," said Ginny hotly.

"And no one twisted your arm to do so," argued Harry as they sat down, with Luna looking at them.

"I thought we got lucky quite frankly, not that I'm complaining mind you," said Luna. "A lot of the great triumphs in the world are ruled by luck. Skill often has little to do with anything..."

"But it surely does help to have a balance of both," stated Harry and Luna nodded in agreement as the train got moving and the group sat in silence.

"I'm surprised you're not talking with the prefects, dictating what you think they should do Harry," said Ginny after a while.

"Why should I, the prefects aren't that important," responded Harry smoothly. "They get the tasks that aren't worth the teacher's time and they get the tasks that aren't worth Dumbledore's time to bother with and he gets the fun stuff that's not worth my time to deal with. They get a shiny badge and the power to assign detentions and take points from the members of their own house. Not that big of a deal really, contrary to popular belief."

"Why would Harry be concerned with what the prefects are doing?" asked Luna.

"He now owns Hogwarts," said Daphne and Harry just cleared his throat. "Ruler of Hogwarts technically..."

"Oh that's nice, congratulations Harry, I'm sure you'd do better than anyone since the Founders have done, maybe you can bring Hogwarts back to the heights it deserves," stated Luna as she turned away from the conversation that Harry was having with others. It was rude to eavesdrop but Ginny edged closer to her.

"Luna, I don't know if you've noticed this, but Harry's completely and utterly lost his mind with power," muttered Ginny.

"Harry's lost his mind?" inquired Luna and Ginny nodded slowly. "Well it's always the last place you've looked."

"No, I mean, he thinks he can dictate what the entire Wizarding World can do, he's changing things, granted, some of them are good, don't get me wrong, but...." stated Ginny as she paused. "None of this

would have happened if Dumbledore hadn't sent Harry back to those Muggles and she hadn't met him."

Ginny inclined her head towards Daphne but Luna just looked highly amused.

"Just don't worry about it Ginny, I think Harry is smart enough to know whether or not he can trust someone or not," stated Luna calmly. "It shouldn't be your concern anyway. If Harry feels like he needs to do something, let him, we wouldn't have gotten through our Defense exams without him anyway."

"That's not the point," whispered Ginny but before she could talk about what the point was, the compartment doors slid open and Hermione and Ron made their way in and without another word, Hermione made her way straight towards Harry, calmly motioning for him to follow them, but Harry did not move, in fact he just stood there.

"Harry, didn't Ginny tell you we wanted a word with you in private?" asked Hermione and Ron just closed his eyes. This was going to end very badly, with Hermione assuming such a bossy tone of voice.

"Yes she did, but I hope she understood that no one has any right to dictate a word with me in private," stated Harry in a calm voice, as he looked back at them. "So what did you want to tell me?"

"Never mind Harry, it's nothing, really," said Hermione, who was angered. Harry had always agreed with her before this summer and now he was being stubborn. Hermione sat down next to Ginny, with Ron sitting down on the other side of her. Ron took a deep breath and decided to throw all caution to the wind.

"So Harry, do you have anything interesting planned for class?" asked Ron.

"New Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher," said Harry, answering Luna's unasked question.

"Finally getting paid to do the job you did for free pretty much last year," stated Luna in an approving voice, who was looking forward to

what Harry would do with the class. In fact, as far as she was concerned, anyone else other than Harry would be a distinct disappointment.

"Don't want to reveal too much, but it will be good, no written homework, as I feel it's counterproductive to actually learning anything of value," stated Harry and suddenly a loud explosion echoed from outside the train as it violently ground to a halt, causing his body to tense. Another crack as it almost felt like something was physically holding the train in place.

"Now what?" asked Ron as his eyes opened.

"Don't tell me we're under attack," said Ginny.

"Sorry, have to, because that's what it looks like," said Luna and suddenly Harry got to his feet.

"You're not going to do something stupid like play the hero, are you?" asked Daphne. "Because I thought you were broken of that annoying little habit?"

"No, nothing stupid like that, but I do want to take a look at why a magical train suddenly stopped," said Harry as he heard a few screams from the front of the train and he quickly turned around to face the others. "Stay right here, it wouldn't take me anymore than five minutes to deal with this but don't move until I have the situation under control, unless it's to defend yourself."

"Oh, is that all?" asked Hermione but she could say no more as Harry was gone and quickly Ginny, Hermione, and Ron bounced up to their feet, seconds later.

"Didn't any of you hear what he said?" asked Daphne calmly.

"We're his friends, we have to help him," said Hermione and Daphne rolled her eyes at her. "Look you don't even know Harry like we do. He might say he didn't want our help but believe me he does."

"You'll just get in his way, Hermione," said Neville. He had lasted longer than anyone else who went with Harry to the Department of Mysteries but even he struggled to keep up with Harry. And that was when Harry was at a fraction.

"WE HAVE TO HELP HIM!" shouted Ginny as she stared at the others. "If you don't, that's your problem..."

"Funny coming from the person who was just seconds earlier condemning him for having gone mad with power," stated Astoria and Ginny winced slightly but recovered. "I guess consistency isn't a Weasley family trait..."

"Look maybe they do have a point, if Harry wanted our help, I'm sure he would have asked us but..." said Ron and Hermione rounded on Ron angrily.

"Not you too Ron, you're willing to ditch Harry and leave him on his own," stated Hermione as she looked at her friend. "You're normally the first one to want to jump into one of these things to help Harry anyway..."

"Last time I jumped in without thinking, I was nearly strangled to death by brains, and if there are Death Eaters out there, I think we'll have much worse," said Ron as his temples throbbed, trying to be the rational one was giving him a headache. "And I doubt You-Know-Who'll bring just twelve this time."

"Fine Ron, you want to be a coward, stay here with the Slytherins, maybe you should have been sorted into their house!" snapped Ginny, losing her temper completely as she turned to Neville and Luna. "Are you two coming with us?"

"No, Ginny, Harry gave us a suggestion and I find that it's best if we follow it," stated Luna and Neville nodded as Ginny just turned, following Hermione who was beginning to have some doubts of her own but put them aside. Harry was likely to do something stupid to get himself killed without her help anyway.

“Well we really can’t have him fight them alone,” said Neville and he turned to the others, as if waiting for someone to make a suggestion that somehow allowed them to help Harry, but at the same time, did not deliberately go against the mandate he laid down.

“He did say five minutes,” said Daphne and the others nodded in confirmation. “Well after five minutes, we can take a peak but don’t get involved unless he really needs the help and something tells me that he doesn’t”

The others nodded, none of them had any better plans to deal with this situation at all.

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A trio of first year girls cowered in the corner, as about six or seven Death Eaters crowded around them, wands held, as they were shaking madly in terror. They saw what they did to an older student outside the door that tried to help them and they had no idea what these people would do to them. None of them had known that learning how to do magic would be anything like this.

“So are you nothing but a bunch of filthy little Mudbloods?” asked one of the Death Eaters crudely as the girls shook in terror, the bravest of the trio finding her voice suddenly, but she was still shaking like mad.

“What’s a M-m-m-Mudblood?” asked one of the girls and one of the Death Eaters raised his wand, levitating the little first year into the air, for his own sickening amusement.

“If you had to ask that question, that means you’re one of them, and little Mudbloods should learn their place,” said the voice of one of the Death Eaters but his concentration was broken by a blast of light striking him in the back. The girl fell but her descent was slowed and she landed on the ground. The other Death Eaters looked around, as their fellow Death Eater had been struck down by a paralyzing hex.

“Someone’s trying to be the hero,” grumbled Dolohov as he held his wand in the air, with a menacing look on his face but suddenly, another Death Eater had been taken out, with his feet being taken out



from underneath him. The door leading to the compartment swung open and smacked another Death Eaters right in the face, knocking him completely for the loop.

“SHOW YOURSELF!” shouted one of the Death Eaters, as first years managed to slip from the compartment while they had a chance and suddenly one of the Death Eaters was tied up in a full body bind, knocked to the ground from the impact.

“The Dark Lord will not be pleased with these games,” warned Dolohov but the person attacking them, wherever he was just responded with laughter.

“As if I cared what Voldemort thought,” said Harry and suddenly two more Death Eaters were taken out, leaving Dolohov the sole Death Eater in that particular compartment but he looked highly amused.

“Potter, you might wipe us out, but the Dark Lord has put more than us on this train to murder all of the Mudbloods and blood traitors!” shouted Dolohov as he slashed his wand and the same purple light that injured Hermione blasted out but whether or not it was successful, it was not to be decided. Suddenly, Dolohov was disarmed and his legs were pulled out from underneath him. The next thing he knew, he was on the ceiling, with a permanent sticking charm on the soles of his feet as he saw Harry Potter move forward, suddenly visible and he walked off without a word.

Several loud explosions had drawn Harry’s attention as he looked on in horror. There were several broken bodies but he saw some familiar faces deciding not to put up with the Death Eaters finding their way on the train. The Death Eaters were caught off guard by this overwhelming show of resistance.

“Exactly how many of them got on the train?” demanded a voice.

“More than enough, just keep fighting,” gasped another voice, but Harry moved around, throwing spells at anything that moved some of them with lethal potential but unfortunately he did not strike any innocent students at close quarters. This was the unfortunate thing

about dueling in an enclosed area and Harry continued to mow down as many Death Eaters that he could manage.

“HARRY!” shouted a voice at the end of the train and Harry looked up, as a small group of fifth and sixth years had just managed to block an entrance, where he saw several more Death Eaters on the outside, trying to break in. There were at least a hundred or so more in addition to the dozens that had already found their way on the train.

“We don’t know how much longer we can keep them out,” said Susan Bones in a horrified voice as the others around her looked equally disturbed, as the Death Eaters were trying to blast their way through but Harry held his wand.

“Everyone stand back, trust me on this,” said Harry but privately he hoped this would work, he had not tried a barrier of this magnitude but a wave of his wand, caused the Death Eaters to be blasted backwards, landing hard. “Keep an eye that, stay here; I’m going to comb the train to see if any others snuck inside that I missed.”

Without another word, Harry rushed off, moving around the train as quickly as he could manage, as tried to ignore the downed bodies, some of them devoid of any signs of life. He had to focus on making sure all of the Death Eaters were cleared off the train. The fact that the train still was not moving was of a concern to them, as he moved up to the other end of the train, taking a little used path to the front, where the conductor was located at but a loud blast shattered several glass windows and it only took Harry a few seconds to block him, as he saw that several more Death Eaters had in fact snuck onto the train than he had previously thought.

“It’s Potter, the Dark Lord will be pleased!” shouted one of the Death Eater but Harry had already knocked him out with a well placed banishing spell into the wall, causing his head to whip back and blood to splatter against the wall. Harry slid underneath the attacks of two more Death Eaters.

“Harry, don’t worry, we’re here,” shouted Hermione and Harry would have smacked his palm into his face, had he not been fighting for his life.

"I thought I told you lot to say in the compartment," hissed Harry angrily, as two spells clanged together like swords in mid air, from his wand and the wand of his opponent, before he pushed him back but now his attention was diverted.

"Harry, we're here to help you," said Ginny, who had managed to take one of the Death Eaters down with a stunning spell, thanks mostly to his grand stand as she watched Harry's spell strike another Death Eater in the chest. She was momentarily distracted when the Death Eater began hacking up blood, barely able to breath and thus a blue light struck Ginny in the side. Her eyes rolled back slightly, with a dreamy expression on her face, before she dropped to the ground and Harry quickly moved over, and blasted the Death Eater who attacked her right through the windows of an empty compartment.

"You two are just getting in my way," said Harry, as he put up a shield charm, blocking Hermione from getting sliced into ribbons. "Get her out of there, send an owl to the school, she needs medical attention, and...you might want to contact the Ministry too."

Hermione looked like she wanted to argue but as she watched the Death Eater get blasted up into the air and land right on the back of his neck with a solid crack, she felt that Harry was not in the mood for any argument. Two more Death Eaters moved forward as they attacked Harry, who pushed back their attacks just barely but there was opposition coming from all sides but he kept fighting, his life depended on it.

"Avada K..." stated one of the Death Eaters but much to Harry's surprise, the luggage rack above him had collapsed, causing the several heavy trunks to land right on top of the Death Eater and several others. They collapsed to the ground, injured by the completely implausible stroke of luck but Harry just shrugged his shoulders, before he levitated one of the trunks into the air and flung it right at an unsuspecting Death Eaters, cracking him right in the chest. He fell backwards, several injuries.

Noise from outside broke Harry's concentration, as he saw the blurs of what appeared to be Ministry Aurors from the outside of the train,

as one of the Death Eaters attempted to scramble, feeling his luck would be better with the Aurors than with Harry but Harry blasted thick ropes around him.

"You could try to get out of those," said Harry lightly to the Death Eater who tried. "But I wouldn't recommend it."

The Death Eater felt a strain against his arms and chest as he struggled to get out and tried to head Harry's warnings, as he heard shouts and suddenly, the train remained in place. Quickly, Harry waved his wand and he pulled up the limp forms of several Death Eaters nearby as he walked by the compartment, seeing the face of Daphne sticking out of the compartment that he had been sitting down in.

"Nothing to be concerned of, just a minor waste disposal problem," said Harry as he continued to magically drag the Death Eaters down the hallway, not caring if they hit anything.

"Figures as much, a bunch of them tried to break into this compartment," said Daphne with a shadow of a smile. "They regretted it immediately. I don't even know what Lovegood hit this one with but he's in a fetal ball, babbling nonsense and the others are incapacitated. Feel free to pick them up."

"Will do, I think the Aurors are trying to get on board, that barrier worked out better than I expected," said Harry who was impressed with his own seemingly unlimited ability. Or perhaps it was that the Death Eaters were that incompetent as opposed to the fact he was that good, it was difficult to say.

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"Blast the doors open, we need to get inside!" shouted Rufus Scrimgeour in a frantic voice, as he tried to have his Aurors blow down the doors. The Death Eaters had sealed themselves on the inside, having free reign against the students, and they had managed to run off those around the train but suddenly the doors burst open, as the bodies of several Death Eaters flew outside and Scrimgeour looked in the train at surprise. "Harry Potter!"

"That's what my parents named me," said Harry calmly before he grew suddenly serious. "I would suggest you take a look at the train, I managed to get most of the Death Eaters off but there might be a couple lurking around and...casualties unfortunately...how did they stop the train?"

"Giant involvement," said Scrimgeour and Harry looked around, wondering what happened to the giant or giants.

"Shacklebolt take your team and bring this lot to Azkaban," ordered Scrimgeour. "Dawlish, you and your team is with me, scour the train, and we'll send word ahead to St. Mungos to have their healers ready, tell them to be ready for the worst."

Harry returned to his compartment as he allowed the Aurors to do their work, not much else he could do. He tried to ignore the smell of burned flesh and he closed his eyes, as he entered his compartment.

Lord Voldemort had made his first strike and struck big time. Now the world would be waiting to see how the other side managed to retaliate and it would be up to Harry to fire back.

**\*\*Collapses\*\*** Done, finished, and damn this one turned out to be a lot longer than I expected. Granted, I could have perhaps shifted some stuff over to a future chapter but the thing is I'm trying to avoid doing that. Otherwise, I keep pushing stuff back and then I end up with something like fifty five chapters and let's not go down that road again thank you very much.

Next chapter, back at Hogwarts, which means I have new situations to play with. Voldemort is not pleased with his Death Eaters. In other news, snow is white and politicians lie. Some people try and fight Harry's changes, with disastrous and hopefully hilarious results. Including a huge mental and magical mismatch involving Harry Potter against my personal favorite literary punching bag, Draco Malfoy.

I'm out, see you next time, whenever that may be.

## Chapter Nine: The Year in Motion:

After that little clean up, the Hogwarts Express had finally arrived and the students had arrived up to the school a little later than usual as they made their way up there. Harry looked around, as Ginny had already been taken from the train, along with others to receive some medical attention. Hermione was shooting Harry nasty glares, as if this was somehow his fault, as Harry exited the carriage, with Astoria, Daphne, and Luna following him.

"Exactly how many Death Eaters tried to enter the compartment?" asked Harry.

"Not as many as you had to deal with Harry," said Luna lightly. "What would you say, about seven or eight?"

"Something like that," responded Daphne. "A bit of a problem mind you, but we managed to deal with them well enough. Mostly because they were tripping over their own feet like uncoordinated buffoons, leaving them an easy target for the simplest of spells. The couple of competent one's who snuck their way in were stuck picking up the slack for those bumblers."

"I think You-Know-Who might have a bit of an inferiority complex," said Luna. "He doesn't strike me as the type to let anyone who might be a match for him and better than him into his ranks...judging by the rate of the Death Eaters storming the train, sheer numbers might have been the plan, rather than any talent."

"You might be right Luna," said Harry with a nod, he had wondered about some of the Death Eaters, how inept they were. Some of them were good at what they did and quite dangerous, but one would not notice that based off of their performance on the train. Neville had joined them as they made their way up to the building, Snape was standing out there, arms folded, as he looked at Harry. "Oh, good evening Professor Snape, I didn't have the pleasure of running into you on the train..."

"Potter, The Headmaster wants you in his office, right now to discuss what happened on the train," said Snape harshly and Harry just rolled

his eyes, as he looked at Snape. "He wants to see you now, and alone!"

"Tell the Headmaster that he can talk to me after the feast and remind him not to forget his place, as I'm the owner of Hogwarts and have the full support of the office of the Minister of Magic behind me," said Harry and Snape looked like he was force fed something nasty, with a sneer appearing on his face. "I have questions of my own to ask him but they can wait until after I'm...as the Headmaster so eloquently put it during my first year, fed and watered."

Snape looked at Harry, unable to formulate a sentence. No student talked to him this way but Potter could because he had the power and he knew it.

"You're dismissed Severus," stated Harry calmly as he waved for the Potions Master, before he turned to Daphne and Astoria. "Are you sure you two will be alright sitting at the Slytherin table?"

"I think we'll manage for tonight, but knowing Snape, he might slip that we've been with you the entire summer," said Daphne. "As we learned with Lupin, Snape tends to spill when he has a grudge against someone."

"Just make sure you check your food and drink for any poisons, it's a rather simple charm, but one that many overlook," said Harry and Daphne and Astoria responded by nodding, a bit insulted that Harry would think they would not take those steps regardless. It was a survival technique in Slytherin to take such obvious precautions. "That goes for all of you.."

"I don't blame you for being so leery about everything, everyone would like to earn the favor of You-Know-Who by taking you out, Harry," said Neville quietly.

"Funnily enough, it will earn them nothing but his ire, as he wants to be the one to finish me himself," said Harry but he frowned.

“Which means this attack on the train was nothing but a senseless act to strike the fear of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and his followers back into the hearts of the public,” added Luna.

“Well a certain amount of rehabilitation was required after the fact that his Inner Circle was knocked around by six teenagers,” said Harry but he knew there was casualties that he could not prevent. He tried to downplay his failures in his mind but at the same time, the only thing that kept his mind completely at ease was the fact that he managed to take some Death Eaters out and remove them from the land of living. It was quite unfortunate that some of them would recover before they were sent back to Azkaban to break out another day.

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The feast and the opening speech by Dumbledore went about as usual. The Forbidden Forest was still in fact forbidden. Magic was not allowed in the corridor. Filch still had a stick wedged up a certain part of his body and banned anything remotely amusing, including six hundred and ninety three new items coming straight from Fred and George's shop. Harry was actually pleased at the free advertising that his investment got. As was the case with the Quibbler last year, there was no way to make people want something more than to ban people from being able to see it. So it was a great advertisement. Quidditch practices were restricted, not that Harry cared, because he had resigned from the team, he had more pressing matters to deal with anyway and Hogsmeade visitations were cut in half, both in time and number.

Of course there was the announcement that Harry Potter was the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. This got many different reactions. The vast majority of the school was excited, whether it was because they had witnessed Harry's ability to teach first hand in an illegal Defense group last year or they were just so excited to be taught by the Boy-Who-Lived. Another group was completely mortified, mostly in Slytherins, but a few members in other houses. They thought a student teaching them was absurd, especially if that student was Harry Potter. Dumbledore had tried to downplay the fact that Harry was technically the owner of Hogwarts and he was just the figurehead Headmaster, but many had heard the rumors that he had



abolished the Board of Governors as one of his first acts and had made several sweeping changes to the education, downplaying magical theory and upping the amount of practical work done. There were also rumors that he would add an extra year for Muggleborn students, so they can learn magical culture and history, before they were thrown into a full blown Hogwarts education. That had several people terrified beyond all belief, especially considering that Potter was going to be the one teaching these weekly classes once they got off the ground in the next year or two.

Then there was that small group that was terrified for their savior. The curse that afflicted past Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers was well known. For the past fifty years, there had never been one teacher who had held the spot for more than a year at a time.

Right now, Dumbledore had gave Harry a look that indicated that he was ready for their meeting, after he made the call for the prefects to escort the first years to the tower and Harry got to his feet, walking as slowly as possible, with Daphne and Astoria joining him from the Slytherin table and to their surprise, Luna joining him, as the group walked up, taking a longer route to Dumbledore's office than was necessary to prove an obvious point who was really in charge here.

At the moment, Harry made it to the Stone Gargoyle in front of the Headmaster's office and looked at it.

"Acid Pop," said Harry as Daphne made a slight face, at the absurd nature of Dumbledore's password.

"He always uses sweets for his passwords," supplied Luna.

"It's almost like he wants for someone who is a threat to him to guess it and threaten his life," said Astoria as she rolled her eyes as the group walked into Dumbledore's office and Dumbledore behind his desk, with Snape with the usual scowl on his face.

"Ah, hello Harry, do have a seat," said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye as he pushed a dish in front of Harry. "Lemon drop?"

"No thanks, I was taught as a young child never to take candy from people who use complex magical wards to manipulate me into being completely and utterly loyal to them," said Harry with a stoic expression.

"No one ever takes a lemon drop," stated Dumbledore sadly but he looked at Harry's three companions, with a frown on his face. "I had assumed I told Professor Snape that we were to meet alone."

"And you assumed incorrectly that I would agree," said Harry. "Daphne's here, to make sure I don't do anything within my best interests."

"This sudden lack of trust is most unnerving Harry, we must learn to stand together, if we wish to triumph over the forces of evil," said Dumbledore and Harry resisted the very obvious urge to bang his head into Dumbledore's desk. The sugary sweetness of Dumbledore's statement was making his teeth rot.

"This isn't about good or evil, whatever they me, it's about me and Voldemort," said Harry calmly. "It's about some psychotic nutjob with a wand who has a bunch of mindless people following him. Speaking of which, Snape, I didn't see you on the train..."

"That's Professor Snape, Harry," said Dumbledore in a robotic, automated manner.

"As I was saying, Snape, I didn't see you on the train," said Harry but Dumbledore held his hand up.

"You may have explained the presence of Miss Greengrass here, but not the younger Miss Greengrass and Miss Lovegood as well," stated Dumbledore.

"If you must know, I'm here, because I'm in no mood to hear the snide, but slightly tired, insults of my dormmates for not jumping at the chance to be Malfoy's personal sex toy," said Astoria as she rolled her eyes. "A bunch of vapid little bints, not worthy to be considered purebloods, but they would jump that pathetic little waste

of air easily. Or they want his gold, which would only be slightly more acceptable, but still, Malfoy's not worthy."

"As for me there is this problem with my things disappearing and Harry has agreed to swing by the Ravenclaw Common Room to help me secure my possessions," said Luna in a calm voice and Dumbledore looked at Harry.

"Surely this is not a matter that you need to be considered with Harry, Miss Lovegood should learn to take care of these matters on her own," said Dumbledore.

"As the ruler of Hogwarts, it is my duty to make sure that all students are given the chance to live at this school without fear of bullying," said Harry before he turned to Snape. "Speaking of which, you better inform your house that I won't tolerate anything from them, especially from Malfoy. If I hear the word "Mudblood" uttered once in my presence, the consequences won't be pretty..."

"I don't tolerate that word Professor Potter," said Snape, as if it pained him to show Harry this level of respect.

"Yet, you call my mother one," said Harry coolly and Snape had no comeback for that one. "Anyway, I believe you wanted to see me for something but first, I want my question answered...."

"If you must know, I was unaware that the Dark Lord had planned to attack the Hogwarts Express, he has kept me out of the loop on many matters recently," said Snape calmly. "Then again, he has done so with others as well, so I'm guessing the Department of Mysteries caused the Dark Lord to lose whatever faith he had in his Inner Circle. It's a slow process, but the meetings that I attend at his main base of operations, at his Muggle father's old own, are making some headway. Rest assure that once I have gained his trust, I will pass on any information..."

"Just how much information did you give him so you can gain his trust?" demanded Harry.

"I had to give some information that lead to the deaths of a few low level members of the Order of the Phoenix," said Snape slowly and Dumbledore just looked remorse, but nodded his head. "They weren't going to help us in the war anyway..."

"So they were cannon fodder basically," said Harry sharply before he turned to Dumbledore. "And this makes you different from Voldemort how?"

"You are in no place to cast blame Harry," said Dumbledore as he recovered quickly. "Considering your conduct on the train, leading to several deaths, which could have been avoided had you not been so reckless."

"Well we don't have to deal with them ever again," stated Harry nonchalantly and Dumbledore cast him quite the disapproving look. "Look, all I did was throw some banishing charms and some repelling jinxes and a few other simple attacks like that. It's not my fault if they landed on their heads and snapped their necks. In the future, I'll be a bit more deliberate and will kill anyone who I see in Death Eater clothing."

"Harry, I'm afraid that is not the way to go about this," said Dumbledore with a disapproving look. "What if they made an error in judgment in joining Lord Voldemort?"

"That's not my concern," said Harry stiffly. "They want to repent for joining Voldemort, then that's fine, but the fact that they decided to join that lunatic in the first place tells to me they weren't worth allowing to live anyway. I don't needlessly kill, Headmaster, but I do what is necessary to protect the world and accomplish my goals."

"It always starts so benevolent Harry, then it goes downhill," said Dumbledore. "Some of the greatest evils who had ever lived start out convinced that they're doing the right thing, that they are committing murder for the right reasons. And at first, perhaps, if there is a right reason to kill, but at times, even the most benevolent of people turn into something more sinister when they let the power they hold take them to the wrong heights."

“Speaking from experience, Headmaster,” stated Harry and Dumbledore gave him a disapproving look. This was not what he meant at all. “The fact is, I’m not intending to go around in circles, hoping for a miracle like the people in charge did last time. I intend to win and not by the skin of my teeth. I want to leave no doubt whatsoever who the better wizard is when Voldemort and I fight next. The problem is that I doubt it would be me, given the fact that you controlled the rate that I learned.”

“This is exactly what I was afraid of Harry, I knew you would not be able to handle the power,” said Dumbledore.

“I have to handle the power, because it’s the power that I need if I hope to defeat Voldemort,” said Harry and Dumbledore opened his mouth. “I know what you think the power is and I think it’s completely insane. Voldemort fears death, given by the insane measures that I believe he might have taken to achieve immortality.”

“I’m afraid that you might be heading down a dangerous path Harry,” stated Dumbledore calmly. “Do reconsider what you’re doing, as it’s still not too late and remember not to shun your friends. They are the greatest asset you will have in the upcoming struggle.”

“If they act like Ginny and Hermione did today again, they won’t be my friends much longer,” stated Harry coolly. “They’re nothing but a liability and I can’t afford weakness. If Voldemort knows he can use something against me, he will...”

“Harry, this attitude is not becoming of you, your friends have done nothing but support you,” stated Dumbledore with a disappointed look on his face.

“No, they recoiled in horror when I punished Kreacher for the role he played in Sirius’s death,” stated Harry and Dumbledore had hoped to bring this issue up, as he was very disturbed at what Harry did. “If they have weak stomachs for that, then they’re be horrified with what I may have to do later. I might have been a little vicious with Kreacher for the part he played in Sirius’s death and I might do horrifying things to Bellatrix when I get my hands on her, but it’s to prove a point.

Harry Potter is no one's doormat and don't forget it, Dumbledore and I'll warn you not to get in my way."

"Very well Harry, I'll give you the room you feel you need, for the moment," said Dumbledore with a sigh. "Just think long and hard about the actions you plan on taking..."

Suddenly Dumbledore slumped forward, clutching his head in agony. Harry just looked at him with a smirk, he knew what Dumbledore just did, it was only a matter of time before he did so.

"Are you alright Headmaster?" asked Harry with faux concern.

"It's nothing, Harry, just a headache, the stress of the attack and the war in general does get to you at times," said Dumbledore evasively, regretting his attempts to take a peak into Harry's mind.

"We're just get out of your way, Headmaster," said Harry with faux politeness as he turned to the others who nodded. "Long day tomorrow after all, it's best that we head off to bed right now."

"Yes you're...dismissed," said Dumbledore but the group had already had their backs turned and had vacated the office, as Dumbledore turned to Snape. "I would advise not taking any trips into Harry's mind this year, Severus."

"The brat couldn't have perfected Occlumency, he had no aptitude for it last year," said Snape but Dumbledore just looked at him.

"Trust me Severus, you don't want to try, he might not as gentle with you," said Dumbledore firmly, in a voice that left no room for argument and Snape just nodded. "The more pressing matter is to find a way to give Harry the guidance he needs, to steer him back on the right path."

"Slip him a love potion and get him to fall in love with one of the children of your fanatical puppets," said Snape.

"No, Severus, I think that plan's a bit old and wouldn't work anyway, especially if we were found out," said Dumbledore calmly, not even

entertaining the idea for one second. “Besides, after my last plan to guide Harry collapsed, he’ll be checking his food and drink on a level that would make Alastor Moody believe he is overly paranoid.”

“I’m sure you’ll think of something, you’re Albus Dumbledore,” said Snape with a bit of sarcasm evident in his voice.

“Of course Severus, but for right now, it’s a matter of necessity that I take a step back, concern yourself with trying to bring me information from Lord Voldemort, I’ll worry about dealing with Harry and his growing sense of independence,” said Dumbledore. “I’ll arrange a meeting with the Order, now that Harry is preoccupied with matters at Hogwarts, to see if we can make any headway.”

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Lord Voldemort stood in the super secret chamber underneath Azkaban prison, as his disgraced followers stood before him.

“Nine students dead, none of them of any importance a week from now and once again, Lord Voldemort finds that his followers have been embarrassed at the hands of a mere teenager,” said Voldemort. “Not to mention that several of them were murdered. Lord Voldemort is not pleased with any of you and this failure will not go unnoticed. Each and every one of you are expendable and can be replaced by more ambitious wizards. Do not forget this, as your power and influence will not be used as cushions for much longer. You can be replaced.”

“Potter got lucky against us,” said Avery in an agitated voice. “He didn’t fight us straight up like a proper wizard, he utilized trickery.”

“Besides, it’s not like one half blood can bring a bunch of purebloods to their knees and rule over them,” added Dolohov roughly and Voldemort raised his wand.

“Crucio,” hissed Voldemort and Dolohov screamed in agony, causing him to drop to the ground in pain, his fingernails digging into his flesh as he held his place. “Lord Voldemort wants you to understand one thing. Never underestimate an enemy, even if they have different

blood. While it is true that they should be annihilated, until that moment, they should be considered to be a potential threat and one that needs to be dealt with. Potter defeated you because he was the more resourceful wizard on that day.”

Naturally no one had the guts to ask Voldemort if Potter defeated him because he was more resourceful.

“We managed to inspire a bit of fear into the hearts of witches and wizards, but it’s not enough, Lord Voldemort feels there is more that can be done to make people remember why they feared to utter my name,” said Voldemort in his soft deadly voice. “Lucius, I trust you have made it clear to Draco what is to accomplish.”

“Yes, my Lord but are you certain Draco is up this task?” asked Lucius, choosing his words carefully. “He isn’t exactly someone who I would entrust with such a task...”

“Lucius, are you questioning Lord Voldemort?” asked Voldemort smoothly. “Do you think you know better than Lord Voldemort?”

“No of course not, my Lord,” stated Lucius, who backtracked. “It’s just that...”

“Perhaps you’re questioning your own parenting abilities and have realize what a worthless sack of flesh your son is,” stated Voldemort calmly. “He knows his place, he was willing to accept this task, he wants to prove himself to Lord Voldemort...”

“Draco tends to have a bit of arrogance and I fear the power is going to his head,” stated Lucius but Voldemort turned to him with a glare that made the temperature in the room seem to drop several degrees. “Don’t get me wrong, my Lord, I appreciate the faith you show in him...”

“Draco will successfully complete this task or perish trying,” stated Voldemort. “He has one year, ample time that even the most inept of you would accomplish. Let’s not forget your recent failure, Lucius. You are lucky that I’ve allowed you to move back and forth from the



prison. Between your lackluster leadership in the Department of Mysteries, your careless bungling with my diary, and this disaster with the Lovegood girl, you've nearly exercised all of Lord Voldemort's patience. Do not give Lord Voldemort that extra nudge to the end of his rope. Is that clear, Lucius?"

"Yes, my Lord," said Lucius, looking like a schoolboy who had been told he would be held back after school to have a chat with a particularly hated teacher.

"Good, all of you are to return to your cells, Lord Voldemort must keep up appearances with Severus and make him believe that Lord Voldemort has not detected his treachery, plus his sedative draughts have kept the prisoners who have not chosen to join my ranks in check, so they don't babble my secrets to the fools at the Ministry who deliver my followers back to me," said Voldemort, who looked amused by the irony before he grew particularly menacing. "And I must make plans to kill Potter as well."

"That's original," muttered Klea Shae sarcastically but Voldemort raised his wand, causing the critical Death Eater to cower behind the hulking form of Goyle.

The Death Eaters stood there, with Voldemort staring at them, with a menacing glare before he decided to break this down for his slower followers.

"What are you waiting for, a ticker tape parade?" hissed Voldemort nastily. "Back to your cells, immediately, you're dismissed until the next time that Lord Voldemort requires your pathetic efforts."

The Death Eaters staggered back to their cells, they had been foolish enough to get captured, therefore they would remain in Azkaban. Voldemort sat back, as he returned to the Riddle House, where he would summon Snape for their staged meeting.

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The first class for the sixth years was Defense Against the Dark Arts. And not only that, but the first class that Harry would be teaching as

the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. He watched the students enter the classroom. Hermione was one of the first one's who had entered, before everyone else and Harry turned to her.

"Hermione, a word with you," stated Harry in a cool calm voice and Hermione put her books down as she walked over towards Harry. "First of all, is Ginny out of St. Mungos?"

"Yes, Harry, she was moved to the Hospital Wing, she should be able to join classes within a couple of days," stated Hermione calmly, as she waited for Harry to blow up at her. "That curse could have been worse off had it hit a couple of centimeters to the side..."

"Good, once she gets out of the Hospital Wing, tell her that she will be joining you for the next week in detention," stated Harry calmly and Hermione gave him a confused stare

"Why?" demanded Hermione.

"I told you to stay put on the train and you two decided to disregard my warnings, the direct orders of a Hogwarts Professor mind you, therefore, you should be punished," stated Harry coolly, as he folded his hands across each other, as he looked at Hermione, who was at a momentarily loss for words.

Sadly, it was only for a moment.

"Harry, you needed our help, you couldn't have fought all of those Death Eaters alone!" shouted Hermione angrily.

"Would you would like to try for another week in detention, Miss Granger?" asked Harry coolly and Hermione looked at him, before shaking her head. "This type of reckless behavior is unbecoming of a Hogwarts prefect. You might find yourself losing that badge if you keep up this level of behavior and maybe you'll never be the Head Girl. So next time I give an order, I suspect you to follow it to the letter. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Professor," said Hermione sarcastically. Harry just decided to let her tone go before she turned around, mumbling under her breath.

“As if you have any call of lecturing someone for being reckless after what happened in the Department of Mysteries.”

Hermione sat down between Ron and Neville, who both looked embarrassed by Hermione's conduct. It was lucky that Harry did not start taking points.

Harry sat down as he watched the members of the class file in. Mostly former members of the Defense Association, but a few Slytherins had chose to take the class. Daphne gave him a nod as she sat down out of the way and Draco Malfoy gave him a sneer, as if he thought this class was a worth of his time.

“Hem, hem,” stated Harry which caused the vast majority of the class to jump out of their seats in absolute horror but Harry just smirked at them. “Luna was right, you did fall for that. I owe her a butterbeer.”

Harry cleared his throat, before he looked at the members of the class, with a serious expression on his face.

“Welcome to the sixth year of Defense Against the Dark Arts, now I understand that after the official class last year, the teacher's muddling of the subject and how it should be taught, caused us to be woefully behind,” said Harry. “I'll try to catch everything up to the best of my abilities but that might not be a luxury we'll have with what's going on in the world today. Voldemort is out there and his followers as well, fools that will throw away their lives to fight for a lie but there is only one person who gets to be in the position of power and that's the same person who will always hold the position of power. Lord Voldemort and anyone who thinks differently is deluding themselves.”

Harry paused, Malfoy looked like he was struggling not to lash out at this.

“We do have a class, Defense Against the Dark Arts, but what are the dark arts?” asked Harry. “The definition has been muddled over the years, to be anything the Ministry doesn't understand and quite frankly can't control. It's a grey area but we bring you back to the original definition, established by the original members of the

Wizengamot. It's any magic used to cause potentially permanent and irreversible harm. For example, the Unforgiveables are a true piece of dark magic. Wandless magic, however, is not understood by the Ministry, therefore they frown on it but they don't classify it as dark magic. That would make them admit that it exists which would go against the outdated magical education that the entire magical world. Sad to say, this isn't just a problem in Britain, but most other schools in the world. France, Russia, Japan, Albania, The United States of America, Canada, name a country and none of them have progressed much in the last hundred or so years. The same theory that is taught a hundred years ago is being taught today and will continue to be taught a hundred years for now. The main problem is the misconception that all magical requires a wand to use."

"Potter, surely you don't believe this rubbish, the Wizarding World works fine the way it is," said Malfoy, speaking up for the first time and Harry wondered when the ferret would speak.

"Fine, Malfoy, if you purebloods want to inbreed yourselves out of existence and live in the same world, have fun," stated Harry. "But don't come crying to me once the world passes you by."

"Wandless magic is a Mudblood fairy tale," stated Malfoy. "It's to make themselves feel better once the proper purebloods take control back of this world and have their wands snapped..."

"It's no fairy tale, Malfoy, although I do admit, Hermione agrees with you about there being no such thing as wandless magic," said Harry and the fact that Hermione agreed with him had appeared to make Malfoy a bit ill, much to the amusement of the class. "This class is forward and beyond anything. There are only two ways this class can go. You pass everything with an Outstanding or you fail with a Troll. I expect perfection because that's the way it's in the real world. One mistake and you're dead. That's the ultimate failure and this class will be treated as such..."

He looked around the class. Many of them looked terrified, this might have been the hardest class they had ever had and Harry just looked at them.

“Now, to give you a taste what this class would be like, I need a volunteer for a nice little exhibition duel,” stated Harry as he looked around. “Malfoy, since you seem to think you know everything, why don’t you take a shot at me.”

Malfoy looked a bit petrified, but he was not about to back out in front of the entire class.

“A couple of stipulations for this duel, Malfoy, number one, Ordinary Wizarding Level spells only, number two, I won’t be using my wand,” said Harry calmly as he tossed his wand off to the side, causing it to land on the floor far out of reach. “We’ll see how much of a fairy tale wandless magic is.”

“You’re making a mistake Potter,” stated Malfoy.

“No, the only mistake was made by your parents, about seventeen years ago,” muttered Harry which caused the Gryffindors nearby who had heard this to laugh as Malfoy looked angered, clutching his fist. “On the count of three, we duel. One, Two, Three...”

Right away, as he said three, Malfoy let out a cutting curse. Harry just stood there calmly, as a shield charm appeared around him. The curse ricocheted off of the shield and went back towards Malfoy, who just barely dodged the rebound attack. Two more spells were sent towards Harry but he blocked it and suddenly Malfoy was relieved of his wand by a wandless disarming charm. Suddenly Malfoy was blasted off of his feet and his arms and legs snapped together with a full body bind. He landed softly on the ground, thanks to the cushioning charm.

“I believe I win Malfoy,” stated Harry as he stood over the trapped Slytherin, who was struggling, cursing under his breath. “Just remember that even if a witch or a wizard is relieved of their wand, does not mean they’re not capable. That is the lesson that you will learn and one that young Draco has learned the hard way. “

The full body bind was undone and Harry slid Malfoy’s wand over to him, forcing him to pick it up in an undignified manner. Malfoy turned

towards Harry, as if about to curse him from behind but Harry turned back towards him. An ice cold stare made him retreat back to his seat.

“There was no smoke, no mirrors, no wand up my sleeve either, that was wandless magic, in it’s simplest form,” said Harry as he turned to lecture the class. “Now today’s exercise is to practice the shield charm, one of the most vital spells you will need in combat. For the first thirty minutes you’ll pair off and use wands. One of you will use any hex or jinx learned during Ordinary Wizarding Level and the other will try to block it with the shield charm. Then once I give the word, one of you will bring your wands up to the front desk and will try to perform the shield char without the aid of your wand. If you manage to do so wandlessly and silently, so much the better, but that’s a subject we’ll tackle later this year. The incantation for the charm is Protego.”

The class began to pair up and Harry watched them, making his motions, correcting them. With the wands, they did rather find. Without them, it was another matter entirely. It was going to be a long way of correcting five years of behavior of using wands.

By the end of the class, only less than five percent of the class managed the shield spell.

“The key is concentration, people,” lectured Harry in a tense voice at the end. “The only difference is that there’s not a piece of wood in your hand, directing your spells. The magic isn’t in the wand, it’s merely the tool used to focus it. You have the ability to do so. For homework, I want you to practice wandless shield spells. By the next time we meet, I want distinct improvement, so we can move onto other spells. I don’t expect you to be able to do complex magic, but simple often used spells in duels are something I want to see accomplished by the end of this year wandlessly. Class dismissed.”

The class left quickly, talking about the class. Harry sank back behind his desk. He supposed he should not be so hard on them, but still it was frustrating to see them just not getting what was for him the simplest charm he had perfected with wandless magic

Still if this class was anything to go by, this was going to be a long and laborious process, but Harry refused to give up.

And that's the end of this chapter. Coming up next, some development on the Daphne and Harry front(something that got shoved to the back burner a bit in the last couple of chapters for other things), Lord Voldemort plots evil(shocking, I know), Dumbledore makes plans, further cracks in the Golden Trio foundation, and last but certainly not least, a day in the life of Argus Filch. Okay, scratch that last one, but the other things I mentioned will most certainly happen. Along with fun, games, wackiness, and whatever else I can squeeze into the next chapter.

## Chapter Ten: Lord Voldemort's Toupee.

Hermione stormed from her Defense Against the Dark Arts class in a foul mood, with Ron following behind her.

"Hermione, wait, don't overreact to this," stated Ron but Hermione turned around on him.

"I can't believe Harry would do this, he's forcing us to do something that's impossible to perfect," stated Hermione. "Wandless magic, the entire concept is absurd, it just feels so wrong to try to do magic without a wand. Not to mention it's not possible, yet we have to perfect this or Harry will fail us. He's going to ruin all of our futures..."

Ron just stood there, not saying a word. Hermione was just upset that she could not manage the shield charm wandlessly at all, not even one bit of progress and she got knocked down repeatedly. She refused to admit she could be wrong at anything.

"Now he's put me and Ginny in detention, for trying to help him, it's just unfair," ranted Hermione as she was breathing heavily in and out. "He was never like that until...she met him. Now he's lost track of who his friends really are and is trying to shut us out of his life. Harry's making all of the wrong decisions. He needs guidance..."

"So do you think Harry can't make his own decisions," stated Ron calmly.

"Well, not really, considering the fact that he's been handed this responsibility and he's abusing it, for what?" asked Hermione. "What does he have to gain?"

"You know, this isn't Harry's fault, it was Dumbledore's and you know it," stated Ron. "Let's just put it this way. If Dumbledore hadn't tried to force Harry into returning to the Dursleys and subjected him to those wards, do you think Harry would be doing this right now?"

"That's not the point, Ronald," said Hermione shortly.



“Oh, I think it is the point, Hermione,” said Ron calmly. “Harry has been pushed into the corner and he’s lashing back out. You can blame Greengrass all you want, but all she did was help Harry get out of the situation that Dumbledore put him in. If you ask me, Dumbledore sticking his nose in matters that shouldn’t concern him is the cause of what Harry’s doing today.”

“I don’t agree with what Dumbledore did but I’m sure he was doing what he thought was best for Harry,” said Hermione with uncertainty in her voice, as her lip trembled slightly, as she looked at Ron, as if conflicted with this entire situation.

“That’s the problem, isn’t it Hermione, Dumbledore thinks he’s doing what’s best, what’s best for his own goals,” said Ron and Hermione just scowled at Ron’s disrespect towards the Headmaster. “The thing is, I don’t know what I would do if I was in Harry’s shoes but I think he’s acting a bit more responsible than I would have.”

“Ron, I don’t know anymore, it’s just that I’m afraid Harry’s going down a path that’s going to get him killed,” stated Hermione, who looked suddenly worried. “He’s so different, not as arrogant as Malfoy, but still, he’s a completely different person. More assertive and confident in his own abilities and it’s almost like he thinks he’s above most of everyone else.”

“The Harry that we knew died at the Department of Mysteries,” said Ron sadly. “I don’t want to believe it as much as you do Hermione, but this new Harry is something that he’s been pushed to. Something that might be able to beat You-Know-Who and I think in the long run we might be better off for it. This Harry might do what needs to be done to win. The old Harry might try and use a disarming charm to beat You-Know-Who or some rubbish like that.”

“Yes, I doubt that Voldemort would be beaten by a disarming spell,” said Hermione, who spared a brief smile at the absurdity of the thought.

“Just as much of a chance of that happening than Mum defeating Bellatrix Lestrange in a duel,” said Ron as both of them laughed but

then Hermione grew suddenly serious for a few seconds before she turned to Ron and sighed.

"I just hope that whatever power trip that Harry's going on, it will be short lived," said Hermione. "He might defeat Voldemort, but do we really need to replace Voldemort with another power hungry nutcase..."

"I don't think Harry would go to that level," interrupted Ron but he shrugged. "However, I don't really blame him but I think he knows when to stop. He wants to defeat You-Know-Who and he might have to break several rules into pieces to do so and manipulate the odds in his favor but it's just what he has to do. If you remember rightly, if it wasn't for Harry last time, we might not be sitting here having this conversation."

"Perhaps," agreed Hermione as they entered the Hospital Wing, for Hermione to give the unpleasant news to Ginny that she had gained a detention for her attempts to help Harry. "Hello Ginny, feeling better?"

"Sore, that curse knocked me around," said Ginny before she frowned. "Harry was right you know..."

"What do you mean?" asked Hermione.

"We did get lucky in the Department of Mysteries, sure I managed to stun one Death Eater, but really what was that compared to Harry," stated Ginny in a grim voice. "All I got for my help was headaches and nausea. Had that curse hit me at another angle, I might not even been here."

"At least it knocked some sense into you, Ginny," said Ron seriously. "Mind you, the Howler that I got from Mum that reamed me out for letting you risk your life wasn't too pleasant. What was I suppose to do? Stun both of you."

"Maybe that would have been better but it's too late now," said Ginny as she sighed remorsefully. "Harry wasn't too mad at what happened was he..."

"He threw us in detention for the next week," said Hermione who was fuming all of the sudden. "For trying to help him, if you can believe that..."

"He said you disobeyed the direct orders of a teacher and you wouldn't disobey Snape or McGonagall if they gave the same orders," stated Ron. "And if you did, you would have been punished the same, so I don't know why you're upset that Harry technically did follow the rules Hermione."

Hermione just sat in the chair, arms folded. She had no retort, because technically Ron was right this time. So she did the only thing that made sense, not acknowledge the fact that she had in fact been wrong.

"Guess you should have thought about that before we rushed head on into death and became a liability to Harry," responded Ginny but Hermione just looked at her. "I mean, I'm a Weasley, I'm not exactly known for my sense of...well common sense, you're supposed to be the smart rational one here and should have known what would happen if we dive head on into a situation like this."

"So I'm in the wrong with everything, figures, we know that Harry can't do any wrong for some reason," said Hermione with a bit sarcasm in her voice. "The entire class was hanging on his every word, except for a few Slytherins and only Malfoy bothered to question him. If he has his way, the entire school will be directed around his whims and theory will be completely abolished. He's not ready for the responsibility..."

"Hermione, enough, you just can't handle the fact that you're not right this time," said Ron and Hermione turned, at a disapproving glance from Madam Pomfrey before she walked out of the Hospital Wing, in quite the foul mood. "And the fact that Harry's changed to something she can't or won't understand..."

"I'm not sure if I understand him either," interrupted Ginny. "But he is, what he has to become, I guess. I wouldn't want to be in his place. I can't even begin to understand what he's been through."

"I don't quite either Ginny and I've been his best friend for five years," said Ron slowly. "I might have gone mad if I had half of the responsibility that Harry has. If he's cracked, like Hermione believes, I can't really blame him at all."

"Quite frankly, I don't know what to believe," said Ginny, who remembered that silly little crush she had on the Boy-Who-Lived. It amused her now, as she thought how ridiculous it was to be infatuated with someone she barely knew. Of course she was young and naïve right then. "It's just Harry might want loyalty that I don't think any of us will be able to give."

"We'll just see what happens Ginny, get some rest, don't want Mum to send another Howler to me if you don't get better," said Ron as he decided to take a long walk. Hermione had Potions next and he had a free period that he would try to practice that wandless shield spell, even though he doubted very much that he would ever perfect it but if he did, it would be something that would help him against Death Eaters.

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Right after a lesson with the first years, which was just going over the basics and what Harry planned to teach them over the next seven years, Harry had sat down in the Dungeons, ready for Potions class. Naturally, Harry had only managed an Exceeds Expectations but he was willing to force Snape to make an exception due to the fact he had the power to do so.

Harry looked around, as he sat right beside Daphne who nodded. Hermione walked into the Dungeons in a foul mood, moving past Harry and sitting in the back table near some Ravenclaws. The class had very few students, Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini were the only other Slytherins other than Daphne, which shot down the theory nicely that all Slytherins got into the sixth year Potions class.

Snape walked into the classroom and he immediately saw the last person that he had ever expected to see.

“Potter what are you doing here?” demanded Snape.

“Let’s see, I’m sitting in the Dungeons, with a cauldron and ingredients in front of me, let’s see a book titled Advanced Potion Making,” stated Harry in a mock thoughtful voice as Daphne looked amused. “If I could hazard a guess, I’m here for Potions Class.”

“Don’t get cute with me Potter,” stated Snape.

“Sorry Professor, I find it hard not to be,” said Harry with a smirk. “I mean, after all I’ve been through, several tough battles; I’ve still managed to regain my good looks.”

“Ten points from Gryffindor for talking to a teacher with an arrogant tongue,” stated Snape in his usual calm manner.

“Twenty points to Gryffindor for my sharp fashion sense,” retorted Harry in an equally calm manner. “You know, Professor, we can play this game back and forth all year along and you know what, I will win.”

“And why’s that Potter?” asked Snape.

“Because I can remove your ability to take points away from Gryffindor any time I choose,” stated Harry.

“That would undermine the entire Hogwarts points system, Potter,” stated Snape.

“Well, far be it for me to care about that,” responded Harry as he looked at Snape, straight in the eye, almost as if he was baiting Snape to try and take a look into his mind. “I believe you have a class to teach and I might actually learn something...”

“Potter, you don’t belong in this class, you didn’t receive the mandatory marks to achieve entry,” responded Snape and Harry just looked suddenly bored, with a look of amusement creeping into his face.

"I made an exception, I figured you wouldn't mind," stated Harry and Harry could almost see the blood vessel popping on Snape's head. "Go, teach, I'm here to learn about the subtle art of Potions making. I want to know how to empower the mind and ensnare the senses. I want to bottle fame, brew glory, and even stopper death. Unless, you're as big of a dunderhead as I think you are."

Snape held his wand. He was wagering what the negatives and positives of cursing Potter were but that was not to be. Finally realizing the entire class was looking at him, Snape turned, robes billowing behind him.

"So you've made it to the sixth year Potions class," stated Snape calmly, as if nothing out of the ordinary "If I was any other teacher, I would offer you congratulations but all you have managed to do was concentrate the most rudimentary basics of the art of Potions. It only gets harder from here but the majority of the inept members of this class have been weeded out. For instance, Longbottom is no longer with us, otherwise I might have to force you to sign liability waivers for some of the Potions that we have to create, because I could only begin to imagine that chaos he might cause."

"Ten points from Slytherin for abrasive comments towards a student who doesn't even have a chance to defend himself," said Harry calmly.

"You can't take points from Slytherin, in case you haven't realized it, I'm a teacher," stated Snape.

"Ten further points for Slytherin for contradicting me, Severus," responded Harry before he cleared his throat. "And as the supreme ruler of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, I can choose to dock points from the former houses of the teachers, whenever I see fit."

"Supreme ruler, what's this rubbish, Potter," said Malfoy.

"None of your concern, Mr. Malfoy," stated Snape before he turned to Harry. "I was unaware this rule was in effect."

"Of course, you dunderhead, I just made it up ten seconds ago," said Harry.

"Fifty points from Gryffindor for disrespecting a teacher, Potter!" shouted Snape. "And detention with me for the next week."

"One hundred points to Gryffindor because I'm Harry Potter and you're not," stated Harry and Daphne broke out into laughter. It was very unbecoming for a young pureblood heiress but the fact that Snape had not learned that he could not win was quite amusing. It was almost like a dog being smacked with a newspaper repeatedly when they had made a mess on the floor but they had not learned the error of their ways. "Oh and Malfoy can serve my detentions."

"What, I refuse to Potter," said Draco.

"You will Malfoy, unless you want to duel me over it," said Harry and Malfoy paled, remembering the beating he received earlier today. He was already the laughing stock of the entire school, because he lost to a Harry Potter who did not even have his wand. "I thought so, one utter humiliation is more than enough for you for one day."

Snape looked at Harry, unable to formulate a complete sentence but he shook his head off. He decided to get onto teaching the class, before Potter's arrogance made him do something that he would utterly regret.

"As I was saying, the course material for this class is much more advanced than anything you had ever done in the past and many have dropped out due to the pressures they have had, before they had a chance to take their Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests," said Snape as he looked at the class. "I expect concentration and focus for each and every one of you and I wish for you to take this class seriously. Today, we will be making the Draught of the Living Dead, an extremely powerful sleeping potion that if brewed incorrectly can put a person in an irreversible coma. If brewed correct, it is extremely potent. It can put someone in a deep sleep lasting anywhere from three days to six months, depending on the dosage and its use is strictly regulated due to the fact it can be abused. It is important that your measurements are precise, as one miscalculation will lead to a

botched potion. Therefore, we will begin right now and waste very little time. Give the difficult nature of the Potions you will make, you will pair up with the person next to you for the next two years or however long you shall last. The recipe is on the blackboard and you should have everything you need in your NEWT Potions kit."

The class quickly got to work, as Daphne and Harry began working on the Potions.

"So do you think Snape's going to learn," muttered Harry.

"Doubt it, but it should be amusing," stated Daphne.

"You're not upset with my blatant abuse and mockery of the Hogwarts points system," stated Harry and Daphne shook her head.

"No, although it looks like Granger might be, but that's her problem," said Daphne in a calm voice. "I've always thought the points system was a complete joke and the house system ceased being useful centuries ago. It's half the reason why we're in the war we're in right now. You're planning to abolish that soon enough, I assume."

"Give it time Daphne, I made a lot of changes, I plan to eventually fix all of the problems, but give it a bit more time, Rome wasn't built in a day," stated Harry.

"If you say so," said Daphne, who just shrugged. This had to be some sort of Muggle expression because it was common knowledge that the Magical Roman Empire was in fact built in a day. It also fell rather quickly as well, due to some of the problems the very similar problems that plagued the modern day Wizarding World.

They spent the next hour preparing the potion for completion. Daphne was extremely impressed at some of the alterations that Harry had suggested, those Potion texts that she had him purchase really helped with his understanding of the art. Most pureblood families had their children tutored and Snape, naturally wanting to give his Slytherins additional help, had refused to teach those basics in his class.



"Impressive Harry, no seriously, I'm not patronizing you, that looks pretty much perfect," said Daphne as they reached completion. "It's like you're a natural at Potions, I wouldn't have guessed it, but it's true."

"My marks for the past five years would disagree with you," said Harry and Snape made his rounds around the short class, sneering at the brews as he walked by.

"Must run in your family, at least on your mother's end," said Daphne and Harry looked at her. "It was mentioned in one of the books that talked about that night, it had a brief section on your parents. It said your mother was a Charms and Potions prodigy, she might have had Snape's job had she survived. The rest of the book was rubbish and the usual exaggeration but I'm sure the biographical parts about your parents are true. Of course, everyone else would care about the fairy tale of how the Boy-Who-Lived triumphed over He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

"Intriguing," said Harry, as Snape looked at their completed potion, he was at a loss for words.

"Greengrass, I must congratulate you on your work of getting Potter up to such an acceptable standard of work," said Snape calmly. "It's a shame that you've fell into the company you have recently..."

"Actually, Professor, Harry did most of the work, I just assisted with some of the measuring and double checked the instructions," said Daphne and Snape looked aback.

"Congratulations Potter," said Snape in a sullen manner as he looked over the Draught of the Living Dead, almost hoping to find something wrong but it was completely perfect. He decided not to voice that observation, otherwise Potter's head might not fit through the door. Snape made one last round before he turned to face the class. "You will take a sample of the Potion you have just completed, label it clearly, and place it on the box on my desk. The work today was merely adequate and you will do better or you will be forced to leave my class in disgrace."

"A real charmer, isn't it?" asked Harry.

"You should try and put up with him as your Head of House," stated Daphne. "And I want a word with you about Defense, privately, away from prying eyes and ears, if you don't mind..."

"I know the perfect place," said Harry and Daphne responded with a nod, as they walked from the classroom. Snape stood in the door way. "What time would you like Malfoy to serve the detentions you've irrationally given me, Professor?"

"Professor Snape, I must insist, surely you'll not let Potter get away with this," stated Draco and Harry just turned to him, a smile on his face.

"It's not a matter of what he'll allow," said Harry and Draco looked at him but he remembered the utter embarrassment that he suffered early this morning and stepped back before he did something stupid.

"Seven O' Clock, Mr. Malfoy," said Snape in a flat tone of voice, but he prepared to go to bring this up to the Headmaster at the staff meeting this evening and Draco opened his mouth, looking about ready to say that he was going to write his father than he stopped, as if he suddenly remembered that his father was in fact in Azkaban.

"You can be cruel sometimes you know," said Daphne and Harry just looked at her but she was smirking. "Don't think I'm condemning you, Malfoy would have done the same thing you would have done in the same position, hell, he would have abused his power worse."

"True," said Harry but he reasoned that he was doing what was necessary. He wanted the Death Eaters and anyone else who supported Voldemort to fear him as much as the normal Wizarding population feared Voldemort. Perception was everything and the reason why Harry had revealed his wandless magic. It would make Voldemort not only try to guess the extent of his powers but also wonder what extraordinary powers that Harry would be hiding.

“Headmaster, surely you’re not going to let Potter get away with abusing his power to such a gross extent,” said Snape the moment he walked into the staff meeting.

“Good evening to you as well, Severus,” said Dumbledore, ignoring Snape’s usual ranting about the arrogance of Harry Potter. It was to the point where Dumbledore had known all of Severus’s complaints by heart and could hear them in his sleep. The other members of the staff arrived. “Mr. Potter informed me that he would not be attending this meeting, due to other responsibilities so we can begin.”

“Of course not, mere staff meetings are something that’s below the ruler of Hogwarts, the utterly perfect and talented SuperPotter who can do no wrong,” grumbled Snape under his breath which got him some glares from the staff members.

“Severus, don’t you think it’s time to just let it go,” said McGonagall as she looked at Snape with a stern expression. “Most people would have moved on with their lives by now, but you choose to keep a grudge active long after James Potter had been decayed in the ground.”

“Potter thinks he can get away with anything,” protested Snape, as if he brushed McGonagall’s words off like they were nothing. “Now that he thinks he can get away with anything and to think, if Edward Greengrass had not been so careless with how he invested his gold, none of this would have happened.”

“Yes, Severus, we know what you think about the situation, you only talk about it every staff meeting,” said McGonagall in a tired voice. “Besides, if you had been a bit less biased against Mr. Potter, I doubt you would be in the situation you’re in.”

“So I’m supposed to worship the ground the boy spits on like the rest of this world, I take it,” said Snape.

“Severus, please, this argument is getting rather old and while I do agree that Harry needs to be reigned in for his own good, complaining will only hurt the situation,” said Dumbledore.

"I don't see what the problem is, the reforms Mr. Potter has been making are long overdue," said Flitwick. "I mean, magical teachers are grossly underpaid when compared to their Muggle counterparts and young Harry arranged for us to have raises."

"Well it did help that he eliminated the counterproductive Board of Governors," inputted Professor Sprout. "Now their salaries can be invested towards the education of the school, instead of putting a bit more gold in the pockets of a group of overstuffed pureblood nobles."

"Yes, Potter has arranged for more support to be given to the teachers, both financially and otherwise and I welcome most of these changes," said McGonagall.

"So you've decided to just sit back and let Potter take control since he's bought you off," said Snape. "I've had complaints from my Slytherins that he was teaching them a form of magic that is nearly impossible to learn unless you have a natural talent."

"Ah yes, wandless magic, Mr. Potter seems determined to spit in the face of every bit of magical theory that he can," said Flitwick but he looked slightly amused. "I doubt he will fail everyone in the end for not perfecting this art, as he says..."

"I don't know what Mr. Potter will do, he's been mentally unhinged after that incident in the Department of Mysteries and I feel Miss Greengrass has taken advantage of his vulnerability because of her family's situation," said Dumbledore sadly.

"If you ask me, Mr. Potter's current situation is based on the fact that you left him with those Muggles and yes Albus, I realize you've had your reasons," said Minerva. "Putting those wards on him wasn't one of your better moves either..."

"I never intended for Mr. Potter to find out but now we must live with the consequences," said Dumbledore. "And I believe Mr. Potter intends to take steps to slaughter each and every one of Lord Voldemort's followers, until it's just him against Voldemort and this cannot be allowed to happen."

Dumbledore paused and decided to speak again when no one decided to add their input.

“Harry is on a path that is very similar to Lord Voldemort was, Tom had lived a childhood that while not abusive, was devoid of any and all love, it warped him slightly,” said Dumbledore sadly. “When he learned of the great power he had and the influence he could wield using that power, he began journeying down the path that caused him to become Lord Voldemort. I fear if we don’t keep a close eye on Harry and attempt to reign in his darker tendencies, we may have a larger problem than Lord Voldemort at his very worst to deal with.”

“Albus, you placed him at the Dursleys, knowing this, and knowing Petunia’s dislike for the Wizarding World,” said McGonagall “And now you act surprised that this is happening...”

“I had precautions in place that some of Harry’s darker impulses would be tempered, but an unforeseen circumstance caused those plans to be derailed,” said Dumbledore, as he waved off the concerns. “Rest assure that this is a tough period of Harry’s development and he needs to tackle his destiny by taking the proper path, not become the very thing that he’s to be fighting against but that’s something that will be tackled in due time.”

Dumbledore paused, he did not wish for this staff meeting to turn out to be about Harry Potter, but Severus had forced the issue by his usual, tired complaints involving the boy.

“Now, on another note, I feel the security measures that are in place may be of a benefit to the school,” said Dumbledore abruptly changing the subject. “It may take some time for us to get used to them, but until the time Lord Voldemort meets his unfortunate demise, they’re necessary precautions I’m going to have to take.”

With those words, the staff meeting went on without little other incident, more or less going over the security measures to keep the students safe for the potential threat of an attack.

“So this is the legendary Room of Requirement,” stated Daphne as she looked it. “So it can change into any room you want.”

“Well in theory, I’ve never really tested its limits and it only appears when someone has a need for it,” stated Harry and Daphne nodded as it had been converted into a nice spacious room with a comfortable looking couch that both sat down on. “Used it last year for...”

“Your illegal Defense Against the Dark Arts group, I know,” stated Daphne. “Heard the rumors about it afterwards, it sounds like you did a good job, shame I wasn’t invited.”

“Well I was still in my, all Slytherins are the scum of the Earth and don’t deserve to live stage at that time,” responded Harry. “Of course, I thought everything was going nice until Edgecombe had to stooge us out to Umbridge and Malfoy managed to grab the list with all the members. One of the only things that Dumbledore did for me is that he took the fall, even if we know exactly who the people were meeting for.”

“Perhaps you should have thought up a room that no one could enter without your permission,” responded Daphne and Harry just shrugged, before he responded with a nod.

“The younger, more naïve, me would have never thought of something like that, but we have Dumbledore’s tampering to thank of but it’s in the past,” stated Harry and he looked at Daphne, who suddenly looked preoccupied about something. “Something on your mind?”

“I guess you could say that,” said Daphne as she looked at Harry seriously. “Malfoy made a remark that made me think he knows what happened to my parents and where they are, whether they’re alive or dead, but given we were brought to Malfoy Manor....”

“So Malfoy decided to follow in his Father’s footsteps,” stated Harry suddenly and Daphne looked at him, confused at how he came to this conclusion. “I suspected something, given the fact that one of those

curses he tried to throw at me was close to something I saw the Death Eaters used but I guess Voldemort must be desperate to let someone as inept as Malfoy into his ranks but then again, given some of the rubbish I had to deal with on the train, I'm not as surprised. Technically, though, he hasn't been marked yet..."

"How do you know?" asked Daphne.

"I had a detection ward around my classroom door and the door of my office, it lets me know if anyone with a dark mark walks through my classroom door, also anyone using a Polyjuice Potion or under glamour charms, but the point is, anyone who might have the potential of killing me would be known right away," said Harry before he took a deep breath. "The fact is, Malfoy might have some mission to complete or something, but that's just me guessing. I'm going to tell Luna and Neville this, but since you'll see Astoria before me, tell her to stay on her guard."

"I think she already is, after Crabbe and Goyle attempted to get a hold of her when she was walking back from class later," said Daphne and Harry looked at her in shock. "Don't worry, Astoria's alright, but I doubt Crabbe and Goyle will be having any children after what she did to them."

"As long as everything is fine, that's good but back to Malfoy, Voldemort would have a reason to kill every one of you but he wouldn't dirty his hands doing it himself," said Harry. "Malfoy might be sent to do so to prove himself, so..."

"Check my food and drink for any poisons, keep my wand on me at all times, put security spells around my bed, not that's things I already do but thanks for the warning Harry," said Daphne with a smirk. "But, considering what you think to be true, what if He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named wanted Malfoy to kill you."

"Then it's a suicide mission, but I doubt it very much, as Voldemort wants me for himself," responded Harry before he gave her a slightly smile. "Voldemort obsessed with being the one to personally kill me you see, it's almost disturbing the more you think about it."

“Yes it is, but back to my parents,” stated Daphne and Harry nodded. “There’s only a small chance that they might still be alive but I didn’t mention anything to Astoria of what I overheard, I wouldn’t want to her to get my hopes up and yes I realize there’s a good chance they would have been killed immediately the moment I left.”

“If they’re alive, they are, if not....” Stated Harry but he did not have the words to complete that sentence.

“Something I have to deal with, I know, for all I know, they could be rotting away in a dungeon deep under ground,” responded Daphne before she looked at Harry, taking a deep breath. “Now Harry, the Defense Against the Dark Arts class today, I think I know what you’re trying to prove, but I just remember what the goblin said...”

“About wandless magic being a natural talent, I know,” said Harry. “Actually I’ve found though a bit of research that simple wandless magic is something that can be done by most. It’s complete mastery of wandless magic that’s a natural talent, and I have the type of talent where using a wand is diluting my magical potential. Most will struggle and many will even fail to perform the simplest of wandless spells. After five years of magical education, it’s next to impossible for about ninety five percent to learn, with the exception of a couple of spells.”

“You’re trying to prove something,” said Daphne triumphantly as if she figured out what game Harry was playing but Harry was smiling. “I get it, I think. You’re actually teaching them the spells with a wand, so they know them to defend themselves first but you’re teaching them the wandless magic for what I’m sure is a very compelling and potentially underhanded reason.”

“Very good Daphne, ten points to Slytherin,” stated Harry. “I actually have two reasons for this, one benevolent and once slightly spiteful. I didn’t just twiddle my thumbs when I spent most of it upstairs, I had time to plan and plot.”

“Very well, let’s get the boring explanation out of the way, the benevolent reason if you please,” said Daphne.



"Maybe someone will learn something that will help save a life or two, maybe their own," said Harry. "I'm not holding out hope that anyone in the class will perfect, given how rare complete mastery of the art is but if they learn something that's good for them."

"And the spiteful reason?" asked Daphne as she had her theories but she wondered if any of them would be close to what Harry was thinking of.

"The Ministry of Magic put me through absolute hell last year with their games, in fact the Wizarding World in general has mostly treated me for a source of entertainment, without any acknowledgement of my rights," stated Harry slowly. "Therefore, the Ministry wants to play with my life, then they should know that everything has consequences. With help from the Minister of Magic and a little bit of incriminating information that I managed to dig up, I changed the results for the Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests. To pass the exam, one must completely master a number of charms for wandless magic, the vast majority of the spells pretty much impossible..."

"So everyone is destined to fail," responded Daphne in a voice that was both awed and horrified. "You do realize that the majority of jobs at the Ministry require a NEWT in Defense Against The...you know this, you're smiling...what are you up to, exactly?"

"Something that Voldemort won't ever have the imagination to do, to cause the Ministry to fall," said Harry. "Point being that given the fact that it's crucial to have the Defense NEWT for most jobs at the Ministry, people will retire or get killed in the war but these jobs won't be filled by fresh blood. Given the ancient laws in place, the Ministry can't recruit from overseas to fill the jobs, not that it would do them much good anyway."

"That's right," said Daphne, catching on immediately and she was intrigued by the game that Harry was playing. "Because despite all of its faults, Hogwarts is still the best magical school of the world, there is no grand utopia of magical society elsewhere. And once the British Ministry falls...the other countries would fold immediately and that leads to the entire Wizarding World to crumble to dust within a few years."

“Exactly and the Ministry can be rebuilt from the ground up, by a reasonably wealthy young wizard, fixing things and putting people into place that will cause the Wizarding World to move forward,” concluded Harry as he got more excited. “Now, the only problem is that I have to sabotage the education of all of the students of Hogwarts, but quite frankly, grades won’t matter the way I see this war heading anyway. The Ministry at its current state will never be reformed. It needs to completely be burned down to the ground before it’s brought back up from the ashes. This is step one of my plan to win the war, against not only Voldemort but all of the parasites infesting the Wizarding World.”

Both Daphne and Harry sat in the Room of Requirement for the next few seconds, there was silence as Daphne just thought quickly but carefully over what Harry just said, thinking about any potential problems but for the moment, she could not think of anything. A year ago, she would have never thought Harry to come up with such a plan but once again, he was changing, for the better, despite the dismay of some people.

“If it was anyone but you, I would just think you’re blowing a lot of hot air out of your mouth,” said Daphne calmly. “But you’re completely serious, you’re actually going to do this and going to obliterate the Wizarding World just defeat one psychopath with a wand.”

“More or less, yes,” stated Harry who was unable to read what she was saying.

“That is the single most underhanded, diabolical, fiendish, and low plan I’ve ever heard of in my life,” stated Daphne slowly before she slid a bit closer to Harry, to look him directly into the eyes. “And that’s what makes it brilliant.”

“Do you think it would work?” asked Harry.

“I’m sure it will, you have an annoying ability to achieve the seemingly impossible, blatantly spitting in the face of all logic,” stated Daphne who continued to stare at Harry, as if trying to get some more insight

from him, because there was more. "I just wonder what would have happened if you were like this from the beginning..."

"I don't wonder, Daphne," stated Harry calmly. "Why wonder about something that never happened?"

"Curiosity Harry, just mere curiosity, at what might have been, perhaps a bit foolish yes, but I just can't help myself for that much," responded Daphne as she was amused. Harry had the potential to be everything that the pureblood elitists that polluted certain rungs in Wizarding society.

"Would I have learned the same lessons if I had been like this from the beginning?" asked Harry. "Or would I have been one of them?"

"As you've said, not something we could know or even begin to guess," said Daphne, who knew what one of them were, as she slowly turned her eyes away from Harry. "With plans like this, you're going to win."

"Yes, I just hope the future of the Wizarding World is as glorious as I hope it is," said Harry, who looked at Daphne amused. She was trying so hard to hide the warm glowing expression on her face, directed towards Harry but she gave her head a little shake, before she turned slightly back towards Harry, with a smile appearing on her lips as she moved just a bit closer towards Harry, where they turned face to face, just inches apart.

"You have to win Harry for there to be any kind of future but I don't think that's a problem," stated Daphne as she looked right in Harry's eyes, straining to fight the oddest impulse, one that she had not had for the first time. Funnily enough it had been with Harry and only with Harry, something made him more desirable than any other boy that she had ever encountered or would ever encounter. There were things that pointed towards this fact but nothing completely. "And given the fact I don't compliment easy, I know it's surprising for you to hear this from me but I do believe in you."

Suddenly, unexpectedly even to her, Daphne threw her arms around Harry's neck and leaned forward. It was a second before she realized

exactly what they were doing as their lips pressed together. The logical part of her brain kicked in, wondering if she was overstepping some invisible line by taking such a drastic step, by kissing Harry. She wondered if he would think she was acting like a vapid fangirl, throwing herself at him but he wrapped his arms around her and returned the kiss.

Harry was caught completely off guard. They were barely friends and now she kissed him. And he kissed back. It made so sense whatsoever, but Harry made a split second decision to go along with the flow and what ever happened, happened. He stroked his fingers through her dark hair, while looking right into her blue eyes, as she wrapped her legs around him, pressing against him, as they both deepened the kiss. He began lightly exploring, not getting too ambitious. He was enjoying this, especially her body pressed against his in such a matter. The Hogwarts robes left a lot to the imagination.

Daphne slowly pulled herself away from Harry, before she looked at him in the eyes, with slightly swollen lips and looking positively breathless. She had made a decision to stop this right now before it escalated too far, no matter how much she was enjoying where they were going.

"I wasn't really intending to do that, you know, it just happened," said Daphne, carefully but Harry just gave her a warm smile that caused her to struggle against

"Well that's how these things normally go, but it did catch me off guard, it came out of nowhere," said Harry, as she was still against him.

"Well were you expecting a long dramatic buildup over about six or eight months?" asked Daphne but she had a light smile on her face. "What do you think this is, Potter, a work of fiction?"

"Sometime's I wonder ," remarked Harry with a knowing smile and a slight wink. "So now what?"

"Well what just happened doesn't have to be meaningful life changing experience," said Daphne. 'It's not like I'm going declare my undying

love for you in front of the entire school. It just was something that happened in the heat of the moment and...might happen again for all I know if the opportunity presents itself."

"Looking forward to it then," said Harry with a grin as Daphne just closed her eyes, shaking her head but she was grinning, as she slowly rose up from the couch.

"Good night Harry," said Daphne as she spared him one last look, as if debating something but she turned and walked out.

"Good night Daphne," muttered Harry in a slightly dazed voice, as he watched her walk off and out of the Room of Requirement.

Harry Potter was brilliant at many things but never as long as he lived would he understand the inner workings of the female mind. He decided to take a walk the long way back to his office, to give him some time to clear his mind before he returned to his office for a night of sleep.

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In the secret, dark, depressing, but long forgotten, portion of Azkaban prison, several Death Eaters had gathered for a meeting that their master had called. The last meeting had gone off rather dismally, a couple of weeks ago they had that embarrassing fiasco involving the Hogwarts Express.

They watched as their master arrived, walking forward in his black robes. Much to their surprise, he had a full head of red hair but as he got closer, quite a few Death Eaters noticed that their master was in fact wearing a Toupee, not that any of them were willing to call him out on this intriguing new addition.

"Lord Voldemort welcomes you to yet another meeting," stated Voldemort in a calm voice, as several people tried to pretend they were not staring at the toupee that was currently on top of Voldemort's normally bald head. "Lord Voldemort hopes you invested your time wisely in the killing, torture, rape, and dismemberment of Muggles, Mudbloods, blood traitors, and other such rubbish. Because

Lord Voldemort has spent all of his time in seclusion over the past several weeks thinking of an ingenious plan that will allow us to finally take control of this wretched world.”

“And what would that be, my Lord?” asked Bellatrix in an excited voice, as she licked her lips at the thought of doing anything to service the Dark Lord.

“The plan involves luring Harry Potter into the Department of Mysteries with the prophecy that links our destinies together, using his godfather as bait,” said Voldemort as several of his Death Eaters looked as if they thought their master had completely lost his mind this time. “Lord Voldemort knows that you’re speechless at such an ingenious plan...”

“That’s already been done,” remarked Bellatrix in a calm voice. “Remember, I blasted my flea bitten mutt of a cousin through that mysterious and quite frankly creepy veil and then Potter tortured me with the Cruciatus Curse. I spent many glorious nights since pleasuring myself to that memory.”

“To what, the torture or killing Black,” muttered one of the Death Eaters.

“With her, I don’t want to know,” muttered another Death Eater.

“Yes, of course, Bella, thanks for the reminder,” stated Voldemort. “Lord Voldemort has had so many masterful schemes throughout Lord Voldemort lifetime that it’s difficult to remember which one’s Lord Voldemort has already done.”

Voldemort looked at his Death Eaters, who were awaiting his grand wisdom.

“Okay, how about this plan, Lord Voldemort knows this one has not been done,” stated Voldemort calmly. “We have one of Lord Voldemort’s followers impersonate the Defense Against the Dark Arts...no wait that’s already been done as well, blasted Potter, Lord Voldemort hasn’t been able to think straight after that brat has ejected him from his mind. Enchanted diary...no been done. Put Lord

Voldemort's face on the back of a teacher's head...no been done as well. Release those Pensieve memories of Slughorn, Dumbledore, and Grindelwald...no that's too sadistic even for Lord Voldemort.

Lord Voldemort looked at his followers.

"My Lord, if I may have a suggestion," said Lucius, throwing all caution to the wind, because if he gave his master the plan that would lead to Potter's demise, perhaps then the Dark Lord would be grateful enough to cancel the suicide mission that Draco has been sent on. "Given the fact that the majority of your faithful followers are stationed here and you have control of the prison, why don't you hatch some brilliant scheme to lure Potter to Azkaban, so he can be dealt with immediately..."

"Silence, Lucius, Lord Voldemort's trying to think," responded Voldemort calmly. "Yes, I've got it, since the majority of Lord Voldemort's faithful followers are stationed at Azkaban and Lord Voldemort has control of the prison, some brilliant scheme to bring Potter to the prison should be hatched so he can be dealt with."

Lord Voldemort turned to them all as they nodded in agreement.

"A brilliant plan is it not, Lord Voldemort's glad that he thought of it," said Voldemort. "Now, Lord Voldemort is sure you're all wondering what is up with the toupee?"

"Yes, my Lord, that did cross our minds," stated a younger Death Eater, who had not quite learned the hazards of antagonizing Lord Voldemort.

"Lord Voldemort got it at a discount off of the decapitated head of a rich Muggle that stepped in my way," stated Voldemort softly. "Seemed to me that he had issues with his receding hairline and decided to cover up the problem but it offers Lord Voldemort a chance to disguise himself perfectly. After all, with this particular shade of red, Lord Voldemort could pretend he is a Weasley and no one would know differently."

Lucius let out a slight snicker.

“Keep in mind Lucius, Lord Voldemort only pretends that he’s a Weasley,” responded Voldemort. “It is no different than when your wife pretends that you’re satisfying in the bedroom.”

Lucius looked like he swallowed something rather foul as the other Death Eaters snickered at him being taken down a few pegs.

“Are there any further concerns?” asked Voldemort and they shook their heads. Lucius had informed Voldemort of Potter teaching wandless magic some days ago and needless to say the Dark Lord was a bit disturbed, but it was foolish to show any weakness. “Very well, Lord Voldemort dismisses you.”

And that’s the end of this chapter, as quite a bit of time will pass leading to the next chapter.

As for a certain scene in this chapter, I went back and forth on what would happen for quite some time and rewrote it more than a few times. First I had it happening, then I changed my mind, and rewrote it not happening at the last second. Then I changed it back and forth until the final result that we got. As was noted in the dialogue, it was just one of those things that happened and where everything goes from there, only time will tell.

I enjoy this version of Lord Voldemort greatly and I’m going to add new wacky quirks to Voldemort’s personality as I see fit, but when it comes down to a situation that warrants it, he’s still the most dangerous dark wizard who ever lived. I have what I think is going to be a fun little scene when he and Harry meet face to face for the first time in this story.

And that be it for this chapter. See you for the next.



## Chapter Eleven: Time Gets Away From Us:

The latest meeting of the Order of the Phoenix had been called to order, not that they had any useful information. Severus had just managed to get bits and pieces from the Dark Lord as of late and other than a few rumors that were overheard in the Ministry hallway, there was little to be known. Lord Voldemort had been rather quiet and that made them all the more nervous. Given Harry's newfound sense of independence, the Order had more than enough concerns, without having to play a game of, "guess what the homicidal madman is up to".

"Report, Severus or have you come back empty handed once more," said Dumbledore, who had his briefest moments wondered if either he had been mistaken about Severus or if Voldemort had detected Snape's treachery and had decided to limit the information that was allowed to reach Snape's grasp. The first theory was absurd and Severus would not be among the living if the second theory proved to be true.

"The Dark Lord's recent behavior has been rather peculiar," stated Snape slowly, as if trying find the right words.

"Define peculiar Severus," said Dumbledore in his best kindly grandfather tone.

"He has this new habit of speaking in the third person, well granted, he's done this on occasion in the past, but never to this extent," said Snape. "He's made some...odd fashion decisions as of late to say the least. A toupee for instance, the most absurd one I've ever seen and now his decision to shun robes..."

"Don't tell me he's decided to become a nudist," stated one of the younger members of the Order unable to contain himself and Snape had a disgusted expression on his face, as the most disturbing thoughts entered his mind.

"Thankfully not as of yet, but he now is wearing a silver jumpsuit with a sequined dark mark stitched on the back," stated Snape. "I think it's

safe to say that the Dark Lord has finally lost whatever sanity he has been holding onto over the years.”

“Seems to me he lost that when he decided to start killing people,” muttered Moody under his breath but Dumbledore gave him a disapproving look, before he decided to clear his throat, looking on deep in thought, contemplating what Severus had told him.

“I know you have some theories on what the Dark Lord has devalued into this...Muggle cartoon character,” stated Snape calmly and Dumbledore looked, putting a finger to his chin as he thought about this matter carefully. Tom’s entire life was a blueprint of reasons of his recently acquired psychosis, not that he was mentally stable before Severus had told him of these new concerns. Being conceived while under the influence of a love potion was believed to have some mental side effects. Then there were the number of dark rituals that Tom put himself under to increase his powers, that perhaps warped his sanity. Losing his body for thirteen years did not even help matters and there was the fact that he failed to beat Harry time and time again.

However, if Dumbledore would have to take a guess, it would have to be that Voldemort’s recent failed possession of Harry and the after effects of being in Harry’s mind, especially with all the precautions Dumbledore had in place, caused Voldemort to go off the deep end, as Muggles might say.

“Any number of things, but I still say we treat Lord Voldemort as if he could brutally murder us at any time,” said Dumbledore as most of the table agreed with nods.

“Yes, that nutcase might be luring us into a false sense of security, only he knows what his state of mind is,” said Moody, who was intrigued by Voldemort’s behavior, as an Auror, it was a useful tool to predict the next move of a mass murderer but often times was not that accurate, due to the instability.

“And the Dark Lord might be planning to kill Potter,” responded Snape as an afterthought as the members of the Order snickered.

“Well to be fair, we didn’t need to have our nose up Voldemort’s arse to know that bit of information,” muttered Tonks under her breath.

“Nymphadora Tonks!” cried Molly Weasley in a scandalized voice and Tonks just rolled her eyes. That woman had no right to take that attitude with her. The only reason she was in the Order, was because she pretty much worshipped the ground Dumbledore walked on, with a couple of notable exceptions, mostly regarding Harry being placed with the Dursleys, even though she agreed that Dumbledore needed to keep a close eye on the boy for his own safety and feared that the power would be getting to his head.

“Yes, Voldemort will make his next move once he does, he distrusts all of his followers I’d imagine, Severus is not the exception but rather the rule in this case,” remarked Dumbledore casually. “Now, we have the matter of Harry Potter...”

“Of course, can’t go one meeting without bring up Potter,” muttered Snape sarcastically which got him several glares but he cheerfully or actually not so cheerfully, ignored them.

“Harry’s newfound independence is rather alarming, he’s making more decisions that while they are technically helping Hogwarts and making things more secure, I wish he would have consulted me on,” stated Dumbledore.

“You mean those accursed dark mark wards, they went off three times when....” Stated Snape and the members of the Order just looked at Snape, who had realized perhaps a split second too late that he had said a bit too much.

“Sound to me like you went somewhere where you were not allowed, Severus,” stated McGonagall sternly.

“Just to Potter’s office, the Headmaster ordered me to take a look around, to see what he’s up to,” responded Snape and there were several mutterings. “Not to mention the one time I did get in and have a look around, the protecting the trunk in Potter’s office nearly took my hand off.”

“Good lad,” said Moody and Dumbledore just looked at him disapprovingly.

“Not good, because that means Harry’s hiding something that might not be in his best interests to have,” responded Dumbledore.

“You don’t think that Harry might be dabbling in the dark arts, do you?” asked Molly and Dumbledore looked thoughtful for a second, unfortunately that was one thing that he could not pin on Harry.

“No, none of the usual warning signs are there, it leaves very distinct signs and I would be able to detect even the most subtle hints,” said Dumbledore, who had sadly seen the signs with several of the sixth and seven year Slytherin students, along with a few students from other houses, and sadly a couple of Gryffindors, which appalled him quite frankly and had attempted to cover up that problem by modifying some memories. The other three houses were expendable but if any Gryffindor was caught using the dark arts, while at Hogwarts, it would ruin the house’s reputation as the beacon of light and hope. “He has used his power to his fullest extent and I fear that he might have an agenda given his overreaction to the precautions I had to take.”

Dumbledore sighed.

“But I will continue to keep an eye on Harry, to find ways to keep him from straying off the path that so many have before,” said Dumbledore. “His growing relationship with Miss Greengrass is a concern of mind, given the troubles that her family has been but right now, it’s not to be helped. I will endeavor to talk with Harry in a few weeks, when hopefully some of the bitterness regarding the necessity of his placement at the Dursleys had been given. I fear that he has condemned Miss Granger already for her questioning of his new attitude and he has been cool at best with the younger two Weasley children.”

With that, they went on with the rest of the meeting. Dumbledore thought hard about Voldemort’s lingering insanity and the fact that Harry might be further slipping away from potential control. Harry in particular was something that Dumbledore could deal with. He would

just need to be slightly more heavy handed with his methods but it could be done, even though a misstep at this point would wreck any headway he would make.

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“Ron, I don’t care, I’m having a word with Harry about this, this is absurd,” said Hermione after Potions class one day, in early October. “He’s had plenty of time to cool down and think like a rational human being, but he’s acting like a child...”

“Seems to me that he’s only getting back at Snape for what Snape did to him all those years,” responded Ron calmly and Hermione just gave her friend a disgusted glare. “Oh Hermione, just imagine what Malfoy would do with that kind of power. He would make some rule that all the girls at Hogwarts would have to sleep with him or something like that.”

Hermione shuddered at that very thought but she turned and walked towards Daphne and Harry, who were both looking rather amused about something. Harry used to confine everything in her but he had grown so distant. Part of it had been because of what Dumbledore did but most of it was the fault of one Daphne Greengrass. She had lead Harry towards something that she had not been and now they appeared to be getting rather closer.

As Hermione walked off, Ginny moved over, curiosity drawn despite all common sense otherwise, towards another argument that Ron and Hermione had and she looked at her brother to Hermione who was approaching Harry.

“Despite the fact that the last time she questioned Harry she ended up in detention, she’s trying this again,” responded Ginny and Ron responded with a grim nod as he watched forward. It was like a broom crash, horrifying but at the same time, he was unable to look away. “Hermione might be smart in the sense that she gets good grades but she’s displaying a deplorable lack of common sense.”

“Pretty much yes,” said Ron and he decided to look at Ginny. “How were detentions with Harry like anyway?”

"Put it this way, you don't want to irritate Harry enough to throw you in one," said Ginny as she shuddered and Ron looked at her. "No he didn't hurt Hermione and I in any way, physically at least but mentally...let's just say I think that Dumbledore made a big mistake by putting Harry with those wretched Muggles. The funny thing is, it would give people like Malfoy the perfect argument to go against them...."

"That doesn't answer my question Ginny, exactly what did Harry have you do in detention?" asked Ron and Ginny just looked suddenly terrified.

"Don't want to talk about it, never question Harry ever again," responded Ginny, as she remembered the fact that Harry had made Hermione and Ginny watch what he called "home movies" of his childhood, whatever they way. They looked like pensieve memories to her, amplified by a projection spell, as they watched Harry be used as basically slave labor and be emotionally torn down at very instant. It had been over a month since they served those detentions and the only good thing was that it had replaced the Chamber of Secrets in her nightmares, which actually might not be a good thing.

"She's really going to try and confront Harry about something," said Neville as he showed up, shaking his head, with Luna walking close behind him.

"I'm afraid so," said Ron with a sigh. It was amusing to him, considering that a year ago, he would have done something stupid like this and Hermione would be in the right but now the roles had been reversed somewhat. She still got better grades than him but he was improving.

"Poor girl, won't ever learn," said Luna in a remorseful voice and Hermione was right face to face with Harry.

"Don't look now Harry, but I believe you're going to get a lecture for giving Gryffindor one thousand points for having such beautiful emerald colored eyes," said Daphne with a sigh. "You might have short changed yourself but that's another story for another day..."

"Harry, a word with you please," stated Hermione, as she regretted it immediately but now that she had Harry's attention, she could not very well back down.

"What is it, Miss Granger?" asked Harry in a tired voice, like he did not know.

"Don't take this the wrong way," said Hermione and Harry just sighed, those words always, without fail, preceded something that he would most certainly take the wrong way. "Don't you think it's a little childish to be manipulating the Hogwarts point system to settle a personal vendetta...."

"Hey, he's not one who started this," stated Daphne. "Snape's first words to Harry, were if I'm not mistake, "Harry Potter, our new celebrity" in the degrading fashion that has only been mastered by Snape..."

"No one asked you," said Hermione angrily but Harry just looked at Hermione. He wondered if he would have better luck talking to a brick wall.

"Hermione, where were you five years ago when Snape was using the Hogwarts points system to settle a personal vendetta?" asked Harry and Hermione looked at Harry, dumbstruck. "I'm just making up for all the points that we unfairly lost over the years and then some more. I don't even give a damn about the House Cup, I doing this just so I can piss Snape off..."

"So that's it, I can't believe you could be so childish," responded Hermione in an agitated voice and Harry and Daphne looked very amused about something.

"Calling a Professor names could be cause for a detention Miss Granger," stated Harry calmly. "Unless you wish to see any more cherished childhood memories from my time at the Dursleys..."

"No Harry, of course not," said Hermione quickly as she remembered what she had seen. She questioned Dumbledore's logic after seeing

those but she still felt she had to respect the Headmaster. Perhaps he had not known the exact extent of what Harry had gone through. After all, who puts someone in charge of a school that willingly condones child abuse. "It's just...please don't....use the Hogwarts point system as a tool to get back at Snape for what he's done. I know it's unfair that he's treating you badly because he didn't like your father but at the same time...what you're doing is no better."

"Actually, it is, considering the fact that I hate Snape for what he's done and not the actions of someone else, just like Dumbledore, just like Voldemort, and just like every single other Death Eater, and wannabe Death Eater in this school," said Harry. "Hermione, just worry about your education and I'll worry about my life. Unless you've discovered where your loyalties should lie, then it's best that we part ways. "

Without another word, Harry and Daphne walked off and Hermione was left there, as Neville and Luna followed them.

"The two Weasleys might be coming around," said Luna.

"The key word is maybe, as in I'm not sure they'll be willing to go through this all the way, whatever it is your planning," stated Neville, but he decided not to press the matter further. Without Harry, he would have been dead at least twice and thus, Neville trusted Harry with his life.

"Yes, I hope they might shed some of their counterproductive behavior but it's not to be helped," responded Harry with a slight sigh as he turned, casting an anti-eavesdropping spell, to shut out any unwanted ears. "I need people to stand by me no matter what, because this isn't going to be easy, where I intend to go to win this war. And this is only the first step I intend to take, who knows where I might go from here."

Daphne nodded, she knew a little bit from what Harry told her and she suspected Luna and Neville might know something as well, but Harry was still in the first stage of a bigger plan. She knew he had an idea where he wanted it to go, where it would actually go was another matter entirely.



“Better get going, have to teach my first years next, actually a pretty good group, given the fact their minds have not been poisoned for the most part because of the outdated views of the Wizarding World,” stated Harry. “Fine until we get to about the third year, where everything falls apart. It would be a shame of the vast majority of this school failed their exams...”

“Yes it would Harry, but perhaps if we work harder and apply ourselves, we might actually succeed in excelling in your class,” stated Luna as the group parted ways to go to their separate classes, as Harry remembered the meeting that he would have to attend with the Minister this weekend. He had given Fudge a sufficient amount of rope to hang himself, so he would be reliant on Harry’s fame to bail him out of some sticky situations and thus would extend Harry’s influence through the Ministry. His focus had been mostly on establishing his control of Hogwarts which would be standing long after the Ministry would topple, but he would not let any of those pompous fools at the Ministry forget his face. He mourned the few productive members and what could happen, but the innocent had to die in some cases, so the guilty could be purged.

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Dumbledore sat in his office, an impatient expression on his face, as he awaited for the arrival of Harry. It was reaching the middle part of October and other than a couple of mysterious disappearances of some moderately important Ministry officials, nothing of note had really happened on the Voldemort point since the infamous meeting where Dumbledore had learned of Voldemort’s interesting new sense of fashion. Given some of the attire he was known to wear, Dumbledore figured he was wanted by the Aurors many times over.

He had called Harry for a meeting a half of an hour ago to discuss some pressing matters, including lessons that he had planned to give Harry this year that would help him reach the conclusions that Dumbledore wanted him to regarding Voldemort. The boy had either disregarded his message or was being late on purpose. Severus had been a nervous wreck lately, as Harry was making threats about

revoking his ability to take points away, if he had one more Gryffindor first year come to his office, bursting in hysterics.

“Okay, Dumbledore, I’m here, but this better be worth the time I’m taking out of my schedule,” said Harry as he entered the office and sat down in the chair in front of Dumbledore.

“Hello Harry, how are you doing?” asked Dumbledore.

“How am I doing?” asked Harry, with a disgusted expression on his face as he repeated the question back. “You called me all the way to your office, when I could be doing better things, like prepare for Voldemort by practicing all sorts of advanced spells that would allow me to actually win...”

“Now Harry, you’ve missed staff meetings regularly due to your other obligations,” said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eyes. “I’d like to check up on the teachers of my school regularly...”

“That’s how you detected that Barty Crouch Jr. was under the Polyjuice Potion, posing as one of your oldest friends, right?” asked Harry but he cut off Dumbledore before he responded. “Oh that’s right, you didn’t deduce that brilliant little fact until after I had fought for my life in a ritual that brought Voldemort back to life. Something that I suspect you knew might have happened, but I’m sure it’s all for the Greater Good and I’m not looking at the bigger picture. Did I nail all of your excuses for your ineptness that year?”

“Now Harry, I feel that you should show me some respect, after all I’m the Headmaster of this school,” stated Dumbledore.

“The Figure Headmaster, don’t forget your place, because I’m still the ruler of Hogwarts,” said Harry.

“Owner Harry, to say you’re the ruler would imply you believe that you’re better than most,” responded Dumbledore.

“I don’t think,” retorted Harry. “I know I’m better than most. The only person who could beat me is Voldemort and I’m taking steps to

change that. Other than that, no one is my equal, including you, Dumbledore...”

“I have some concerns about your sixth year Defense Against the Dark Arts classes, namely the inclusion of wandless magic,” said Dumbledore and Harry motioned for Dumbledore to continue. “Do you believe that you’re expecting too much of your students? This is an ability that doesn’t come natural to most and if you base the NEWTs completely off of their ability to perfect all the spells taught wandlessly, most, if not all will fail.”

“If they apply themselves, they should have no problem passing my exams,” said Harry calmly. “It’s not my fault that they hold onto outdated beliefs, given who most of them look up to, it’s not exactly that surprising.”

“Harry, I’m sure you’ve researched this matter and realize that other than a few charms, most struggle to use magic without their wand as a focus,” argued Dumbledore who was trying to get through to Harry, to make him see the error of his stubborn ways. “You wouldn’t be doing the Wizarding World a great service by ruining the chances of many potentially great minds by having them take an impossible exam, that most of them are destined to fail...”

“Once again, Dumbledore, if they apply themselves, then they should be able to pass my exams,” stated Harry, a bit more slowly, but he was amused that Dumbledore had come to this conclusion, because Dumbledore could do nothing about it. “Sounds to me like you have no faith in the education you helped shape over the past five years...”

“I didn’t say that, but there will be an inadequate amount of people entering the workforce to replace those who die or retire,” argued Dumbledore. “Harry, you could destroy the Wizarding government of this entire country and cause total anarchy if you continue to push students to the improper education. Not to mention the fact that they will be unable to defend themselves against Voldemort...”

“I’m teaching them the proper spells with a wand first, if they must insist on relying upon one,” stated Harry. “But tell me, what would happen if their wand got lost or destroyed in the heat of battle?”

"They'd be dead, Harry, but that's the unfortunate necessity of war," said Dumbledore. "I believe you're putting too much faith in this wandless magic talent that you may have...."

"Have you have practiced wandless magic?" asked Harry calmly.

"I've never felt the need Harry," responded Dumbledore, who decided not to tell Harry of the fact that he did try in his youth and was absolutely inept. With a wand, he could do anything, without one, he was as helpless as a Muggle. It was quite fortunate that he always had a spare or two at hand, not that he needed it with the wand he had.

"Well that's your problem, but I'm trying to move forward with the Wizarding World, so my educational changes stand and if I ever catch Snape in my office one more time, he won't like the consequences," stated Harry. "Besides you're wasting your time, as if I was hiding it there, my office would be the last place that I would hide something."

"Are you hiding something, Mr. Potter?" asked Dumbledore but Harry just smiled.

"If you were hiding something, Dumbledore, would it be wise to tell anyone?" asked Harry calmly. In reality, he had nothing of value that he needed to hide, as of right now. He was busy relearning everything wandlessly from his old textbooks but he felt a subtle nudge. Dumbledore obviously did not learn his lesson from last time and he struck Harry's mental shields, like a car striking a brick wall at full speed.

Dumbledore was taken aback, as not only was his attack blocked but repelled back at him. It was only due to quick reflexes at putting up his own mental protections that his brain was not reduced to oatmeal. He managed to recover, he was taken completely aback by how quickly Harry managed to master his natural Occlumency shields. Now he would never be able to know how, without admitting that he had violated at least one, perhaps several, magical laws.

“Now, Dumbledore, so this visit to the office is a total loss, is there any further information about Voldemort?” asked Harry. “Because in case you’ve forgotten our agreement, you’re supposed to tell me everything. I managed to get a bit of useful information from the Ministry, but nothing concrete and since you have a spy in his Inner Circle you have to know something.”

“The disappearance of the three Wizengamot representatives recently, may perhaps be Voldemort’s doing, he’s recruiting Death Eaters from students who had recently left Hogwarts, mostly the children of his senior Death Eaters,” said Dumbledore and Harry looked at Dumbledore, almost disappointed. This was information that he could have guessed without bothering to take a trip to Dumbledore’s office.

“I see, well that’s no surprise,” commented Harry lightly. “Anything else?”

“Lord Voldemort has been wearing a Muggle hair piece known as a toupee and has been talking in the third person as well, perhaps as a ruse to lure us into a false sense of security to think he’s not as dangerous as he is,” stated Dumbledore and Harry looked back at Dumbledore, as if he was trying to determine whether or not Dumbledore was being completely serious with what he was saying but Harry just responded with a nod.

“I don’t care how odd Voldemort is acting, personally I would assume that he would kill me once he had the first chance,” stated Harry. “I would continue to assume that Voldemort is the most dangerous dark wizard that ever lived, no matter how peculiar he’s acting.”

“Quite right Harry, for that point, I agree with you,” stated Dumbledore. “Now there is certain things about Voldemort’s past that you might need to know that will help you figure out what you need to know to defeat him...”

“If I needed to know this, why didn’t you tell me five years ago?” asked Harry and Dumbledore opened his mouth, but Harry just shook his head. “Forget it, you think that this information will help me defeat Voldemort.”

"Yes, Harry, it will, it will help you understand Voldemort," stated Dumbledore.

"I understand that Voldemort will want to kill me until he dies and that's all I feel I need to understand about Voldemort," responded Harry calmly. "Besides, I gather you're the one who came up with this information."

"Yes, Harry," stated Dumbledore, who feared that Harry still was unwilling to see the light. "You need to know this..."

"I don't need to know anything that you're going to tell me, I don't trust anything that you would tell me," said Harry. "Unless you're willing to swear a magical oath to tell me the truth, no matter what I ask."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible Harry," stated Dumbledore, which was exactly the answer that Harry expected.

"Then it will be impossible for me to consent with these so called lessons, which sound like another desperate attempt to force feed me your Kool-Aid," stated Harry and Dumbledore looked at Harry with a confused expression on his face.

"I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean, Harry," responded Dumbledore.

"Let me put it in words that you might understand, I'm done listening to what you're saying just because you're Albus Dumbledore," said Harry in a calm voice. "Yes, you might be the greatest wizard that ever lived, you beat a crazed dark wizard fifty years ago, you've had decades of distinguished service as both a teacher and Headmaster at Hogwarts, not to mention a member of the Wizengamot. You could beat pretty much any Death Eater that Voldemort has in a fair fight, you are great but that doesn't give you the right to think you can dictate how I go about fighting my battles and moving towards this destiny mandated by the prophecy, which I'm considering to doubt the validity of right now, given the fact it came from you."

"I'm really saddened to see this level of distrust Harry," said Dumbledore who was about ready to ask what he had done but then decided that he would not want to hear the answer.

"And if you want to give me any information, who was the Death Eater who told Voldemort that part of the prophecy he knows?" asked Harry.

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Harry," responded Dumbledore.

"It's Snape," responded Harry suddenly, in a manner that took Dumbledore completely aback. "You wouldn't be covering for the person if it wasn't. Your little pet Death Eater, the one is supposed to be the master spy, yet gives you no information of value..."

"Enough Harry, I will not be spoken to in this way any longer," said Dumbledore in a voice that would have struck fear into the hearts of many wizards, but Harry just looked at him coolly, as if not intimidated anyway whatsoever. "I'll give you credit, Severus was the one who told Lord Voldemort the prophecy and..."

"Good, I figured it was him," stated Harry. "Don't worry, I'll let him live just like enough to see his masters fall from grace."

Dumbledore attempted to cast a stunning spell, anything to give him a chance to convince Harry in the error of his ways but much to his utter dismay, no spell came out of his wand.

"Another trick that I picked up being the ruler of Hogwarts," responded Harry calmly.

"Harry, Severus may have betrayed the prophecy to Lord Voldemort but he regretted it immediately," said Dumbledore and Harry just looked at him with a disapproving glare.

"Save you reasons, because nothing you can say will convince me that Snape isn't deserving of a slow and agonizing death," stated Harry. "There are three people I hope responsible for the death of my parents and the beginning of the life I've lived for the past fifteen

years. I think you're wise enough to figure out exactly which three people they are."

"Indeed," said Dumbledore in a saddened tone of voice. "Once again, Harry, although I have no way to guide you because of the vow you coerced me into...."

"Yes, Dumbledore, it could have been worse, I could have tricked you into returning to a place you hate every year, before an ever renewing loyalty spell tricked me into swallowing what you spew as the gospel truth," said Harry in a mock insightful voice before he looked at Dumbledore. "Oh yeah, wait a minute..."

"As I was saying, I can't guide you down the proper path due to the unfortunate agreement, but I only offer you the wisdom to think long and hard about the path that you're about to take towards your next battle with Lord Voldemort, as taking the wrong step could lead to your downfall," said Dumbledore and Harry just rolled his eyes. Dumbledore paused for a second, before he decided to attempt to ask Harry about those necessary lessons regarding Voldemort.

However, much to Dumbledore's dismay, Harry already left.

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"You look in a bright and cheery mood," commented Daphne casually as she looked at Harry.

"Dumbledore, just Dumbledore, wasting my time, he's been trying to get me to meet with him, I finally agreed and he has nothing of value," stated Harry with a sigh. "I'm beginning to doubt...no actually I've always doubted, but now I'm almost convinced that Snape's not on Dumbledore's side."

"Or He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named's stringing Snape along and knows he's a double agent," stated Daphne.

"Snape would be deep under ground and the world would be a much better place," responded Harry. "Did you get what I wanted?"



"Yes, I asked around a few Slytherins that I know won't stab you in the back," stated Daphne. "They said they would be interested in joining the Defense Association, if you would have them."

"Great, Daphne you're the best," responded Harry as he gave her a quick kiss in gratitude before he took the list. Their relationship was beginning to develop a bit, but both had mutually agreed that Harry had no time for anything more serious until Voldemort was deep under ground. That did not mean they could have some fun.

"Weasley at twelve o' clock," muttered Daphne as she watched with narrowed eyes, as Ginny approached, looking rather nervous and apprehensive about something.

"Harry, can I talk to you for a minute, please?" asked Ginny nervously, as if she was afraid how Harry might react. "It's about something important...please just a couple of minutes of your time."

"Of course," said Harry as he took a few steps away and Ginny looked rather horrified.

"Mum sent me a package with a letter, suggesting that I do something that I didn't quite agree with," said Ginny quickly. "Inside the package...was a love potion."

"I see," said Harry slowly. "She gave it to you for a reason, I guess."

"Yes, she said that she was concerned that you might head down a path that would corrupt you and you needed something to focus on other than your hatred," said Ginny before she took a deep breath. "She said that you needed some happiness in your life and experience...a loving relationship after what Dumbledore forced you to undergo at the Dursleys. She also said some very unflattering things about Daphne...let's just say it's best if I don't repeat them."

"I figured as much," responded Harry as he pulled a disgusted face. There were times where Molly Weasley went a little too far and this was one of them. "So let me get this straight, she decided to give you a love potion, for you to douse me with, to give me that so called loving relationship that she thinks I deserve, for my own good."

"Pretty much yeah, but despite Mum's warped view on life, using a love potion isn't romantic, it's rape," said Ginny in a serious tone of voice. "Might as well just use the Imperius Curse, I'd be doing the same thing really."

"Nice to know that at least you've made that distinction, that people should be allowed to have free will, something that your mother has failed to realize," said Harry, who remembered the conversation that Mrs. Weasley had with Hermione and Ginny about making and using a love potion. While it seemed innocent then, it revolted Harry right now. They were banned at Hogwarts, but they still were not legal. He suspected there was some pureblood political reason for that "So what do you do with that vile creation?"

"Dumped it down Moaning Myrtle's toilet to be with the rest of the filth," responded Ginny as she had a disgusted look on her face. "I also plan on sending Mum a howler bitching her out for thinking I would ever use something to control another person, after what happened to me with Tom's diary."

"As amusing as that might be, I have a different idea," stated Harry slowly but he could not help but feel that Ginny would not have passed up this opportunity a couple of years ago, when she still had that obsession with the Boy-Who-Lived. "Can I trust you?"

"I swear on my magic that I'll never do anything to betray or hurt you Harry or help someone who might," said Ginny suddenly and Harry just raised his eyebrow. That was a tad bit more than he expected. "I figure after your speech this summer, you wouldn't expect any less."

"Yes, well, maybe Ron and Hermione will come around," said Harry and Ginny just nodded slowly.

"Ron's starting to see where you're coming from, although not decisive enough to be loyal to you," said Ginny. "Hermione...well I think her attitude and disapproval speaks volumes."

"If she can't agree with me on the little things, then how can I count on her for the big things," responded Harry as he looked at Ginny.

“Still, I do have something that you can do for me, do it and I’ll call the life debt that you owe me from the Chamber of Secrets even.”

“Anything Harry,” responded Ginny, who did not want to live the rest of her life

“First, I’ll teach you Occlumency, to help you protect your knowledge of the plans from certain individuals and then, I’ll tell you more, but you will play a rather vital role in defeating one of the greatest roadblocks to victory against Voldemort,” said Harry as he looked. “For now, don’t mention anything to your mother. Allow her to assume that my immunity to Imperius Curses extend to love potions, which is not too much of a lie.”

“Okay Harry, I understand,” stated Ginny. “What time do you want me to meet to teach me Occlumency?”

“After dinner on Saturdays, in the Room of Requirement, I suspect you’ll get the hang of it after a few weeks but if not a month or two,” stated Harry and Ginny nodded, before she turned and walked off as Daphne looked at her.

“So what do you have in mind for her?” asked Daphne calmly.

“Let’s take a walk to somewhere a bit more private and we’ll discuss it,” said Harry as they walked a little bit. “I had a rather interesting letter from the Minister of Magic as well. He has gotten the Wizengamot to agree to upgrade the security protections around Azkaban and has asked me to test them.”

“Who better?” inquired Daphne but this was a rhetorical question. “Better to keep them off the streets and inside that place where they belong.”

“Yes, would have preferred some kind of death penalty but the Wizengamot struck that down,” said Harry in a saddened voice, people complained about the danger that Voldemort’s Death Eaters presented. “Still, in two or three weeks, Fudge suspects that everything will be ready but he will sent me another letter to confirm.”

“Dumbledore will try to intervene about this,” said Daphne.

“No kidding, even with his suspension from the Wizengamot, for the investigation of his handling of the first year after Voldemort returned, he does have friends on the court and he will find out,” said Harry. “Let him try, success is not something that Dumbledore will have any longer.”

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“It is done My Lord, Potter will be coming to Azkaban sometime in November to assist in testing the limitations of the wards, the date looks to be around the seventh or so,” said one of the Death Eaters as Voldemort looked at him from the shadows.

“Excellent, Lord Voldemort thanks you for your help,” said Voldemort, his slit like red eyes the only thing visible. “Potter’s luck will run out, there is no conceivable way he can defeat every single one of Lord Voldemort’s followers on his own. Lord Voldemort looks forward to having Potter on his knees before our time together reaches its climax.”

And that’s the end of Chapter Eleven.

Things are heating up, as Chapters Twelve and Thirteen will be big chapters, around the halfway mark of this story, perhaps a little over half, but unlikely less than half. Still I’m looking at somewhere between twenty and twenty five chapters.

See you again after a little while.

## Chapter Twelve: The Potter and Riddle Hour

The last couple of weeks had been very busy. The classes were going good. Much to his surprise, there were a few who were making rather decent headway with wandless magic in the NEWT Defense classes, but there was a difference between making headway and the perfection that Harry had told his class he expected. Still the few who had figured out a shield charm wandlessly, along with a stunning spell and a few other combat spells, would serve as useful weapons to deal with the Death Eaters. As for Voldemort, Harry had no idea whether or not the man had the ability to perform wandless magic at the advanced levels that Harry did. Right now, he felt it was prudent to assume right now and prepare himself for anything that Voldemort could throw at him. Given what little information that Dumbledore gave him, it was likely that Voldemort was completely and utterly out of his mind.

He had reestablished the Defense Association, he refused to call it the other name, with a select few students. The very elite of the fifth year and above classes, not to mention people that he knew he could trust without fail. He took to scanning the minds of his students during class, to get their true opinions on things. A decent number of them decided that Harry would be the best person to lead them. During the couple of meetings that they had, Harry had told them that they were an emergency line of defense, in case every other line defense at Hogwarts had failed. He made them sign an oath, saying that they would not go out to seek Voldemort or his followers, only being able to fight them in defense of an attack against themselves or their friends and family.

Right now, Harry was outside of Azkaban, followed by Cornelius Fudge, Percy Weasley, and Rufus Scrimgeour, along with Albus Dumbledore, who was being guarded by a group of Aurors.

"Now, Albus, Mr. Potter has agreed to assist us in finding any flaws in the security of the prison, most of our Aurors have ironed out the finer details of the prison, it's just to make sure none of us have overlooked anything," stated Fudge.

"Harry, this is dangerous, I would strongly recommend you don't do this," stated Dumbledore but Harry just looked at him, eyes narrowed. He did not say a word but the glare that Harry was giving him was evident exactly what he was thinking.

"We tested it a few times before your arrival, some of our top Aurors attempted to breach the security precautions around the cells, very few got through the door, we managed to call Moody down and he got the furthest, before he was detained," explained Scrimgeour as they walked up the cells, into the main part of the prison, past several sedated looking prisoners. "The Dementors are at the exits for right now, given your reactions to them in the past, they will need to be the last thing you need to deal with before your clean exit is allowed."

"Fair enough," agreed Harry, who knew that he could better cope with the Dementors thanks to his advanced Occlumency but still it was nothing he was willing to do.

"You'll find that given the fine tuning, escape is nearly impossible, Mr. Potter," said Percy, who looked excited about the prospect of seeing Harry behind bars, even if it was just a simulation. "Some of the best Aurors in the world, including some legendary retired Aurors have tried, with varying degrees of success, to get out, none have gotten far, and all the flaws that allowed them their minimal escape have been protected. It would take a miracle of epic proportions for you to get out."

"You're taking way too much pleasure in this, Weatherby," responded Harry in a low tone of voice which caused Percy to turn away, returning to his notes. Harry turned to the Aurors and Scrimgeour.

"Now the first step is to check our captives for any wands or magical items that might assist them in prison," stated Scrimgeour as the Aurors scanned Harry and removed his wand, the only magical item that could help him to escape. "Then if you had been found with the dark mark, you would be escorted to a high security cell, pending your trial..."

"Ah, this should be a good one, Commander Scrimgeour, the Sirius Black suite if I'm not mistaken," stated Percy as he pointed out

towards the cell as Harry saw a very uncomfortable looking bed coming out from the wall, with a thin mattress, a ragged, moth worn blanket, and a flat pillow. A chamber pot completed the decoy of the room and Harry sat down, with the metal door sliding shut.

“Very well then, let’s take the Portkey and return to the Ministry where we can watch Mr. Potter’s attempts to break free and return in the next hour to collect him,” stated Fudge before he turned to Dumbledore. “You may stay and observe Dumbledore, but if you attempt to interfere, I will have you removed from the Ministry. I must remember you that Mr. Potter is now considered an adult and outside of Hogwarts, you have no jurisdiction whatsoever over Mr. Potter.”

Dumbledore just responded with a cold nod. Much to his dismay, he had no control over Harry’s destiny whatsoever and Harry would not entertain listening to any input. It was quite unfortunate, Dumbledore had his control evaporate over the last few months.

The only good thing to come for this would that perhaps Harry would fail in finding a way out. Perhaps a failure would humble Harry and remind him that he needed Dumbledore’s guidance for the upcoming battle for Voldemort. At the moment, all he could do was return to the Ministry, and observe the security monitor that would give them a close view of Harry from inside the cell and then though the prison.

Scrimgeour, Percy, Fudge, and Dumbledore touched the Portkey and found their way back to the Ministry, as the Aurors returned to their post, ready to help intercept Potter in case the boy had found a way to slip past.

It was going to be a show to watch one way or another. Whether it was to be because of Harry’s failure or Harry’s success that was to be determined later on, but nevertheless it would be an intriguing piece of business.

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Deep underneath Azkaban, Lord Voldemort sat from the shadows, a mirror show the inside of Potter’s cell. Voldemort watched with great

interest. It was interesting what move Potter would make but he was confident of the boy's ability to escape. It would take some great detail and planning to maneuver Potter in the direction that he wanted to from there but if nothing else, Lord Voldemort was a patient man. He had to be to deal with the great number of inept Death Eaters he had to deal with, that constantly bungled his plans.

He tapped his fingers on the chair he sat on, as he awaited Potter to make a move and it looked like the boy was up to something. Only time would tell what precisely that was.

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"Nice cell, good security, nearly perfect, hopefully it will have to help with the revolving door of Azkaban," said Harry as he looked the cell up and down before he raised his hand, before he sent a wandless blasting charm at the door but the door absorbed the magic before it repelled it back towards Harry. In an instant, Harry threw himself on the ground, to avoid being blasted by his own attack. "And not too bad, just in case someone slipped a wand inside, past your precautions which might not be as hard as you think, considering the Portkey I slipped past the inspection."

Harry looked forward, he could feel the monitoring and security spells, including one that was giving Fudge a bird's eye view of what he was doing.

"Would be so easy to use a Portkey to get out but I doubt it would help in removing the flaws in this system and besides, I think I'll do things the fun way," commented Harry as he looked over the door, doing a number of light scanning spells. There was a great number of protections around this one cell, including an Anti-Animagus ward and anti-Polyjuice as well. "At least the Ministry learned from two past mistakes, even if one favored me. However it balances out as I bet at least one Death Eater, maybe not more would be an illegal Animagus. Very interesting...I doubt even Voldemort would be able to break out of here using magic."

Harry put his hand on his chin, pondering something, before he reached into his pocket.



"The key word is with magic," responded Harry as he pulled an ordinary looking Muggle hair pin out of his pocket and walked forward, before he casually picked the lock. For a second, Harry waited, and much to disappointment, the door opened. "Security flaw found, catch me if you can Scrimgeour."

Without another word, Harry made his way out of the jail cell and down the hallway.

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In the Ministry, Percy looked furious and Fudge looked a bit surprised at the method that Harry used to get out of his cell.

"Make a note, Weasley, to charm all of the prison doors against the use of any Muggle item that can pick locks," responded Fudge in a calm voice as Percy rushed to make a note of it.

"Impressive, Harry," commented Dumbledore, who despite their recently falling out, was amused about the utterly simple method that Harry used to get out. It was so simple that it was overlooked, like most things were in the Wizarding World but Scrimgeour got up to his feet.

"Very well, that was only step one of a multi step process but we have many more surprises, some that even Mr. Potter might not be able to guess in his infinite wisdom," stated Scrimgeour as he signaled for the Aurors to release the gaseous form of a powerful tranquilizer potion in the hallway. With most wizards, it would put them under but he suspected with someone powerful like Potter, it would only slow him down. It was up to the Aurors to do the rest of what needed to be done.

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Harry crept down the hallways but he saw the walls ahead, lightly glowing. It was faint, most prisoners in their haste would not see it and get tripped up, but now he held a rock in his hand and tossed it forward. Once the rock hit the ground, it released a gaseous

tranquilizer potion into the hallway. Harry nodded approvingly, had he walked past, he would have been put under for sure but he had managed to trick his way forward. He turned down the hallway, moving down another direction in the hallway. If he could not get out the easy way, a longer approach would be required.

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"Now what?" demanded Percy as Scrimgeour frowned as he was receiving a message from the prison.

"Something is jamming our magically powered vents, it looks like it might be an oversight," said Scrimgeour quickly. "Potter is heading towards the Northeast side of the prison, second floor..."

"Isn't that where the convicted Death Eaters are?" asked Percy.

"I'm afraid so," said Fudge.

"I would highly recommend us to retrieve Mr. Potter right now," stated Dumbledore. "Should he move in that direction, he may be in danger..."

"No, the Death Eaters in that wing are subdued by restraints and behind security protections, they are only unlocked three times a day for fifteen minutes to eat and use the toilet," said Fudge as he wondered why Dumbledore was so interfering. "There might be heavy hitters like the Lestranges in there, but nothing to it. Potter is completely safe, but at least until he meets the secondary security precautions on that wing."

"And what would that be?" asked Dumbledore.

"A small army of Dementors," stated Scrimgeour.

"But I figure, Mr. Potter should be able to handle himself, he did conjure a corporeal Patronus that ran off a hundred Dementors, so about seventy or eight should be no problem," said Percy and Dumbledore just nodded, unable to do much more than watch and wait.

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Harry walked down the corridors, having a nice casual look around, as he looked from side to side and took a deep breath, as he just realized he was surrounded by so many familiar and quite frankly unwelcome faces.

"Hmm, I've seemed to have come upon the worthless scum suite," said Harry.

"Ah, did whittle baby Potter come out and pway?" cooed Bellatrix in a mock baby voice and Harry just turned to her.

"Hello, Lestrage, still insane I see," responded Harry.

"Very, thanks for asking," said Bellatrix with a sadistic grin.

"Just what are you doing hear, Potter?" rasped the voice of Dolohov, playing the game as intended.

"You know, just checking up on the worthless witches and wizards that I thrashed in the Department of Mysteries and on the Hogwarts Express as well," stated Harry calmly. "Just goes to show you that Voldemort is worthless, given he has to settle for worthless pieces of rubbish like you."

"Say those words again, Potter and I'll make ya eat them," threatened Rodolphus Lestrage.

"Yes, Mr. Potter, you seem rather collected when we're separated by metal doors, iron shackles, and many magical enchantments, I doubt you'd be so cool in the face of fire if the circumstances were much more even," said Lucius lightly.

"I don't fear you," stated Harry coolly. "Why should I? The people who have lost to school children time and time again, the only way you can win is by attacking unarmed civilians from behind. You're in Azkaban because you've failed and just like your Master will fall in the end."

He got several angry glares.

“You can complain all you want,” stated Harry. “It’s not like any of you are in the position to do anything to me.”

With a click the doors slid open and the shackles were undone by magic. Harry looked as several Death Eaters got to their feet, removing their wands from underneath the thinned mattress. Many questions went through Harry’s mind, but the incompetence of the Ministry was the obvious explanation for the situation he had just found himself in.

“You were saying, Potter,” said Dolohov as a purple jet of light moved towards him but his shield charm absorbed the impact and he moved around, before he whipped his hand forward, the same way he might whip his wand. The sound of several ribcages cracking echoed throughout the prison, as he dodged spells and curses, using his training from years of Quidditch. Several Death Eaters spiraled back into the empty cells, with Harry sealing the doors shut, before he blocked two attacks and knocked two more Death Eaters on their backs.

“Get him, the Dark Lord would not be pleased if he...” stated a Death Eater, who got cut off, by getting banished right into the wall. Harry maneuvered the attacks of two more of his opponents.

“Get organized you fools, Potter may be talented, but he is not a god, if we overwhelm him, we can set him up for the kill,” said Lucius, as Bellatrix, Rodolphus, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Dolohov, Yaxley, and Klea Shae all moved over.

“You know, saying our plans where people can hear them isn’t a very good idea, not to mention it’s unoriginal,” stated Klea Shae, as he watched Potter blow his way towards more low level Death Eaters, like they were nothing and he looked to be leading them on, making them come to him.

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“Scrimgeour what happened?” demanded Fudge as Dumbledore stood there.

“I don’t know, but I’m working on it, it’s almost like someone has found their way into the prison somehow and has taken control of the protections, but only an extremely powerful wizard might have a chance,” stated Scrimgeour, who had worked several hours overtime, making Azkaban secure and now someone or something had just taken control of that security.

“There is only one wizard that I can think of who would do so and judging by the Death Eaters that had been suddenly let go, it’s quite obvious,” stated Dumbledore. “Minister, you had best hope that Harry finds his way out. You suggested this and the blood will be on your hands...”

“Scrimgeour, get those Aurors into place immediately,” stated Fudge in an urgent voice. This could be a scandal that his political career would most certainly not surprise. Potter would not be able to help in this time, considering the fact that he would be dead.

“Minister, I can’t, the floor has been completely sealed off but the good news is, the Dementors on that floor remain, should I....” stated Scrimgeour and Fudge paused for a few seconds, as if contemplating the plusses and the negatives of this situation before he nodded calmly.

“Yes, Scrimgeour, you should, tell them to subdue any threats by any means necessary,” stated Fudge and Dumbledore opened his mouth to protest it but closed it at once as Scrimgeour gave the word.

“I just hope you know what you’re doing, both of you,” said Dumbledore calmly.

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“Come on, this is the best Lord Voldemort can give me, then I’m not impressed,” stated Harry, as he knocked the Lestrage Brothers, who granted were tough opponents, for a loop. Harry thought he was doing rather well, considering the overwhelming odds that he had to

go up against. The fact that the Death Eaters were somewhat organized did pose a problem, but there was also the fact that they all wanted to be the one who impressed Voldemort, so it was easy for Harry to exploit their egos.

“Just stand still Potter and I’ll give you something that will really impress you,” said Bellatrix as she shot a blast of sickly yellow light but unfortunately she struck one of her fellow Death Eaters and Harry propelled himself into the air, backing her off slightly as he manipulated another pair of Death Eaters against each other, taking them out and sealing them inside the empty cells. “Stand still you little brat, what are you a coward?”

“No, smart, Lestranger,” said Harry as a silver bolt of magical energy struck Bellatrix right in the face. She had a dazed look in her face, before she laughed maniacally before she passed out from the suddenly super amplified pain coursing through her body, but Harry had no time to enjoy taking out one of the Dark Lord’s most feared Death Eaters.

“Rodolphus, Crabbe, Goyle, close in on Potter,” stated Lucius, who had a cut on his cheek. Potter would pay for disfiguring him in such a manner but Harry took out another pair of Death Eaters, before his shield blocked a trifecta of spells.

“I’ve got this, Lucius,” stated Crabbe as he waved his wand, conjuring a vicious looking flock of birds. “ATTACK!”

The birds turned and began attacking Crabbe, pecking their beaks into his forehead and ripping at his eyelids with their claws. The Death Eater threw himself right into a closed cell, knocking himself unconscious as struck and the birds began having their way with his face. Blood splattered.

“Sad,” muttered Harry, as he knocked one of the Death Eaters into the wall with such force that he was certain that it broke many bones. Harry dodged underneath the attack, as Lucius turned to him with a smile. “Why so smug, Lucius?”

“Dementors, Potter, they’re coming,” said Lucius.

"Oh is that it?" asked Harry but he did feel the chill as several dozen Dementors approached, moving towards Harry. The Death Eaters stepped back but Harry just yawned, before he stood back, arms spread, as he waved his hands. "Expecto Patronum."

A bright burst of silver light nearly blinded several of the still conscious Death Eaters, which gave Harry a perfect chance to swiftly and decisively take them out. The Patronus moved towards the Dementors and the Dementors stood, as if paralyzed with fear, if that was possible. They could feel the power coming from this guardian and it was something that they resented, but they could not move.

The Patronus struck its intended targets. They toppled like dominos, the dark creatures landing on the ground. The mist rose from them, as they gave a slight shudder. Harry stepped forward, suppressing the urge to nudge it with his toe but he gave a slight shrug, as he looked up, where Lucius was leaned against the wall, dumbstruck, especially when he realized that he was the only one who was left standing.

"Now, Mr. Potter, perhaps we could bargain, I have gold," said Lucius.

"So?" asked Harry as he moved forward but before he could take Lucius out, Lucius pressed his forearm. The Death Eater slumped to the ground, motionless for right now. It only would have taken a mere motion to kill him, but Harry had more pressing matters to attend to and he now knew for sure who let all the Death Eaters out to play. He walked forward, picking up Lucius's wand as an extra precaution. "Show yourself, Riddle."

"Present, Potter," said the cold voice of Lord Voldemort as Harry braced himself for battle and anything that Voldemort could throw at him. As he saw the glowing red slits of Voldemort approaching, he prepared himself.

Harry bit his lip, trying to hold back laughter as he saw Voldemort's ludicrous appearance. He wore a silvery jumpsuit with a sequined dark mark on the back. He wore the most ridiculous red toupee ever, but that was only the tip of the absurdity iceberg. Voldemort also had

a fake handlebar mustache, a fake goatee and a derby hat on top of his toupee. Harry watched Voldemort approach like a deer in the headlights, before he did the only thing that made sense.

He broke out into laughter as he looked at Voldemort. Harry knew he was still likely the most dangerous dark wizard that he would ever meet in this lifetime, but still the absurdity of his appearance, made it difficult to not laugh. Voldemort just stood there, calmly waiting for Harry to finish, as he took a deep breath.

"Riddle, seriously man, what the fuck?" asked Harry in a calm voice and Voldemort just frowned, as Harry broke out into laughter once again, barely able to contain himself.

"Do you find Lord Voldemort's appearance amusing, Harry?" asked Voldemort in an icy tone of voice as he watched Harry, who struggled to maintain the ability to breath, before he looked at Voldemort.

"To put it bluntly, yes, Voldemort, but I do admit it's a unique strategy, to keep me so distracted, but now that I'm composed, it won't work," stated Harry and Voldemort nodded calmly. "Of course, the fact that I've seen something more absurd than your...choice of clothing and that was the fact the attempts of your Death Eaters would be that."

"You take what you can get, Potter," stated Voldemort. "Lord Voldemort has watched your efforts against the Death Eaters and overwhelming sheer numbers is an impressive feat, no matter how inept your opponents. Therefore, Lord Voldemort has an offer for you, one that you would be foolish to ignore. If you join Lord Voldemort, as his second in command, all will be forgiven. Lord Voldemort has extended you this offer five years ago but understands that you were younger and much more naïve, not understanding what an alliance with Lord Voldemort could bring you. Therefore, Harry, Lord Voldemort feels that both of us would benefit from an alliance. Separately, we are powerful but together, not one wizard could stop us. Think about it Harry, Lord Voldemort offers you a chance of ultimate power. Do not pass it up. The only other option for you is failure, as Lord Voldemort cannot be defeated."



Harry paused, putting a hand to his chin, as if considering the matter thoughtfully.

“Sorry, Riddle, I’ll have to pass, I’ve made a vow never to align with anyone who constantly refers to himself in the third person,” stated Harry. “Or you know, that’s completely and utterly out of his mind.”

Voldemort just stood there calmly nodding.

“Very well then, Lord Voldemort is disappointed by your choice but at the same time, it was not that unexpected,” commented Voldemort, as he held his wand, ready to go. Harry focused on the task at hand, ready for anything. He wanted to see how well he could match up against Voldemort. Technically, he supposed he could use the Portkey to get out of there immediately, but that would be the easy way out and the easy way out was never a way to learn anything. “Therefore, Potter, we duel, one more time, one last time, and this time, only one of us will walk out of here alive.”

“Yes, Riddle, I know, you’re going to kill me and make me pay for my impudence,” responded Harry calmly but Voldemort stood right there. “Let’s rock.”

Both wizards stood in front of each other and sent spells off. They flew through the air at once and connected in mid air. The impact of the two spells striking each other cancelled each other out and Harry raised his arm, before he slashed his wand. Voldemort blocked the attack and sent a blast of black fire right back towards Harry. Harry dodged the attack, causing the fire to burn right through the wall. Bouncing back to his feet, Harry raised his hand and slashed his wand once again. Blocked and both wizards circled each other, before they fired more attacks off, but they were dodged.

“Impressive, Potter, you’ve learned some tricks since our last encounter, Lord Voldemort has to take his hat off to you,” responded Voldemort as Harry threw another attack but Voldemort blocked it. Harry blocked the attack, as both wizards continued to duel, moving into a stalemate. It appeared that the first person to make a crucial error would lose badly and neither wizard was willing to make those errors. Several more attempts but neither was willing to back off, not

wanting to lose any ground. "But there is one thing that you need to understand, that is Lord Voldemort will never be defeated."

"Funny how we're in the same boat, isn't it?" asked Harry in a calm voice, as he looked at Voldemort, before both of the attacks were blocked, as the duel continued to rage on, the magic rocked the entire prison, as they moved to a secluded part of Azkaban. Voldemort slashed his wand but Harry blocked the attack and Harry slipped another curse through.

Much to his surprise, Voldemort was caught right in the hand by the impact. Every bone in his right hand was shattered completely from the impact, causing him to be unable to grip his wand. Harry sprung into the air, but Voldemort switched hands, awkwardly using his left hand. Two silver lights clashed toward in the air like swords.

"Potter, you'll pay," said Voldemort with a slightly pained expression, as his right hand had pain.

"What, making you look like you're still human, despite your best efforts and still can be hurt," stated Harry. "Face it Riddle, no matter how many dark rituals you use, you're still a man..."

Right then, Harry blocked two attacks but much to his surprise, Voldemort forced a cyclone of purple magical energy towards Harry's shield. It struck him right in the chest, causing Harry to be lifted off of the ground and put right through the wall. It was lucky that his shield blocked some of the impact but still, Harry was rocked, wincing as he tried to sit up. Voldemort shattered at least some of his ribs from the impact and Harry tried to fight to his feet, rolling with all of his might, levitating a second of the wall to block the latest deadly curse that Voldemort launched at him.

"Come on Potter, fight me like a wizard," hissed Voldemort angrily, having lost his fake handlebar mustache, derby hat, and goatee in the battle, with the toupee mostly off. Harry slashed his wand but Voldemort blocked it, before he was knocked backwards, nearly landing on the back of his head. Voldemort looked like the dangerous wizard. "I thought you wanted to fight Lord Voldemort, Potter. Pathetic,

I'm ashamed that you were the one to defeat me, such weakness, such...."

Suddenly, several bright orbs of magical energy shot into the air before they exploded, blinding Voldemort with an overwhelming blast of light. Harry raised his hand and slashed it, causing Voldemort to be knocked backwards, right through a door to lead down a set of stairs. Harry collapsed to his knees, breathing heavily but suddenly, Voldemort made his way back up the stairs, with blood dripping from his shoulder, but he was still standing.

"Did you think a mere fall down fifty stairs would kill me, Potter?" asked Voldemort calmly as he threw another spell, but Harry ducked and dodge, before several solid steel spikes launched right towards Voldemort. A solid stone shield appeared and they all impaled the shield, as a black puff of smoke appeared, before Voldemort found his way behind Harry.

A black shadow shot right towards Harry, from Voldemort's wand. It was magic quite unknown to Harry and suddenly, Harry screamed in agony, as the shadow overwhelmed him, in an attempt to smother him. This was more painful than the Killing Curse would be, as the shadow began to overwhelm him, Harry was bombarded with several of his worst memories, over stimulating his brain but Harry pushed off the attack somehow, causing it to burst into tiny wisps of dust.

"The end, Potter," said Voldemort in a calm, deadly voice.

"No only the beginning, Riddle," said Harry as he somehow pulled himself to his feet, looking at Voldemort with bloodshot eyes as a wall of fire rose up and blasted towards Voldemort. Voldemort looked shocked that Harry was capable of performing that and indeed, Harry was a bit surprised but Voldemort blocked the fire, causing it to burn out, before he turned and Harry blasted him with a solid blast of silver light. The pain through Voldemort was liked he was being impaled by a razor sharp spear, but he shook off the attack and whipped his wand backwards.

Harry was hoisted off of his feet and blasted right through another wall. He found himself lying in a pile of rubble, hurting like hell. It was

a miracle that he was still conscious but that would be a matter that Voldemort intended to rectify that matter right away, as Harry felt himself violently ripped back to his feet and pulled forward before he was slammed against the wall.

"The thing about the walls of this prison as there are times that they tend to be very durable," commented Voldemort lightly, as Harry was slumped against the wall, blood dripping down from the wall. "They just need the right amount of force to bust, as I'm sure your found out earlier."

The next spell sent Harry smashing right through the wall, with the added bonus of giving him more physical and mental anguish. He supposed this might be the concussion making him delirious, but he had to fight, although it was foggy as to why. He struggled to get to his feet, but he turned, before he turned his hand and motioned for Voldemort to take his best shot.

"Still standing, Riddle," rasped Harry in a pained voice, as blood splattered from his mouth before he slashed his wand. Voldemort pivoted, mostly, but the powerful cutting curse caught him directly on the right shoulder. It was a burst of adrenaline Harry felt he did not have but he had no more, as Voldemort got up, turning, the bloodied arm bothering him but not enough to raise his left arm, wand in hand.

Another blast and Harry found himself destroying another wall with his body. He was surprised, he thought he would not have any more bones to break but that next fall proved him wrong.

"Well, Potter," stated Voldemort calmly but Harry very weakly lifted his hand, before he summoned enough strength to give Voldemort an extremely rude gesture. "Very well, it's not my death."

Voldemort pulled Harry to his feet, magically and lifted his arm back but Harry managed to block the attack just barely, before he collapsed to the ground once again. A small, logical part of Harry's brain, that had not been damaged from getting put through a wall several times kicked in, reminding him that he did in fact have an emergency Portkey but Voldemort seemed intent on taking Harry's head off. Barely a block as Harry struggled to a standing position.

“Surrender Potter, kneel before Lord Voldemort, and I’ll grant you a painless death, with the Killing Curse,” stated Voldemort calmly. “On your knees Potter.”

“Fuck off, Riddle,” said Harry in a faint whisper, before he managed to summon all the strength he could, for one more attack, a last ditch effort but he had nothing left.

With a resounding thud, Harry dropped to the ground of the prison in a dead faint, completely and utterly beaten from Voldemort. Voldemort looked over Harry, a sadistic grin on his face.

“Say farewell, Potter,” said Voldemort as he raised his wand towards the back of Harry’s neck, measuring him, preparing him for the kill, savoring the moment. “I would like to say you were a worthy adversary, but I’m trying to cut back on lying. So may you finally join your worthless parents...”

At that point, the ceiling, weakened by the number of times Harry had smashed into the walls, abruptly collapsed right on top of Voldemort’s head and much to his utter surprise, the floor beneath him caved him. Voldemort gave an angry yell at this totally implausible event stopping him from killing Potter, before he was buried under the rubble.

By some form of accidental magic, the Portkey activated, transporting Harry out of the prison before Voldemort could dig himself out of the concrete casket.

The end of chapter twelve and oh boy, what just happened, well rest assure there’s a logical explanation for what happened. Well maybe it’s not logical, given the fact that magic and logic really shouldn’t mix, but it’s an explanation. Even in real life there are things that happen that simply make little to no sense whatsoever, so why should fan fiction be any different.

And Harry lost that duel. Just thought I’d point that out for future reference. That’s going to have serious ramifications come the next chapter, mostly for Harry’s mental stability.

Coming up in lucky chapter thirteen, recycling helps the environment and that's what I do, recycling a certain character from Aspirations, albeit with a different twist. Harry takes a more drastic step to put the Death Eaters on the endangered species list. Appearances from characters that got shoved out of the picture, for the Potter and Riddle Show this chapter. Perhaps a bit of romance, but that's really not high priority until Chapter Fourteen.

I'm out.

## Chapter Thirteen: Ramblings of a Shattered Mind:

Daphne made her way to the Hospital Wing, a bit quicker than would be dignified but the fact remained that when she heard something that happened involving Harry, she felt just a bit concerned. Given the fact that he was just returning to Azkaban, Daphne wondered what would have happened. There were several theories running through her mind, none of them exactly all that comforting.

She stopped, as she saw the battered form of Harry lying on the bed. The only way he would be worse off would be if he had died but right now, he did not look too well off. Daphne turned, as she saw that Luna and Neville had stood there both looking worried, even though Luna did her best to hide with a calm demeanor.

"Nearly every bone in his body broken, the boy was lucky not to be paralyzed quite frankly," muttered Madam Pomfrey as she managed to get Harry's mouth open, to force a number of potions down his throat. He was barely responsive. "Magical exhaustion well, it seemed like he pushed a lot of excessive energy to fight, when he could barely stand. By all means, he should have died."

"Not good in other words," said Neville in an apprehensive voice and Luna responded with a sad nod.

"No, something happened, I've heard rumors but few of them would be true," stated Luna. "The one that I think is most likely is Harry encountered You-Know-Who once again, he must have found some way to take control of the prison..."

"Given the article in the Daily Prophet, that's likely," stated Neville, as there was an article in a special addition of the Prophet, talking about how someone had taken control of the wards of Azkaban and had turned it against Harry. The Ministry was torn apart for their bungling but that was something that was common.

"Oh, Harry," muttered Daphne under her breath as she stepped forward, looking at his normally handsome face, which was covered by bruises and a nasty gash, almost a jagged, crooked mark shaped like a "D" around his eye. She suspected he would have a few more

scars, some joints that no longer worked the way they should. "I thought we had you broken of this stupid heroics havoc of yours, but I guess old habits tend to die hard. Once you feel better, I will be giving an earful but right now rest."

"We heard," stated the voice of Ron as he saw that Hermione was standing behind him, with Ginny following behind both of them, looking at Harry, eyes widened in absolute horror.

"I see," stated Daphne. "We don't know what happened, but we learned enough to guess...it was He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named..."

"How did he survive again?" asked Ginny eyes widened.

"Sheer dumb luck," responded Daphne calmly which got her a disapproving glance from Hermione but the Slytherin girl paid her no mind. "Not looking good for him, but he'll pull through."

"Worst, I've ever seen him, I can't believe...Azkaban...some friend you are to Harry," stated Hermione as she rounded on Daphne. "If you cared about Harry, you should have made him stay inside the school..."

"And how do you make someone stay, especially someone as powerful as Harry?" asked Daphne and Hermione just stopped. "Let's not forget that Harry's an adult by our laws and can make his own decisions, for better or for worse, and you keep refusing to acknowledge the fact that Harry has moved beyond you, you've seem to think it's your right to stick your nose into his business..."

"I was Harry's friend long before you even decided to give him the time of day," responded Hermione harshly. "He might be an adult because of some stupid pureblood magical loophole but the fact remains he's not emotionally stable to handle the responsibilities. I'm not saying Snape is completely innocent but what Harry is doing is no better than anything that Snape did to us."

"Look, Harry is doing what he feels he has to do, he has some strong convictions, if I was him, I would tell the entire Wizarding World to just go straight to hell and go to some remote island, with as many wards



as I can afford,” responded Daphne in an agitated voice. “In fact, that’s what he should do after today.”

“Leave it to a Slytherin to suggest the coward’s way out,” said Hermione who had about had it with Daphne as Ron just gritted his teeth and Ginny looked apprehensive. This was going to be painful.

“Better to live as a coward, than to die heroically,” stated Daphne swiftly, as Hermione had her wand. “And don’t embarrass yourself Granger, you couldn’t even beat me in a duel if I had one hand tied behind my back and the other one was helping you.”

“Er, I hate to be the one to bring this up,” said Luna in a soft, calm voice but it had a sense of urgency. “But this is in fact a Hospital Wing and Madam Pomfrey is giving us, or rather both of you, agitated looks, and she looks a few seconds away from kicking us out.”

“Fine,” responded Daphne as she turned away, to focus on Harry, completely ignoring Hermione’s indignation. Neville and Luna approached, with Ginny taking a subtle step to the side.

“I don’t even know if we should be here,” said Ron to Hermione, who just responded by biting her lip in frustration.

“Poor Harry, look at him, he must be wreck, he’s lived such a harsh life already,” said Ginny in a worried voice, doing exactly as Harry would want to do. Sometime told her that he would not want her to shelve the plan, just because he was near death. “He really does deserve some happiness, but nothing seems to be working...”

“What, precisely doesn’t seem to be working?” asked Hermione in a sharp but low voice and Ginny just pretended to wince, but she could barely conceal a smile.

“Nothing Hermione,” muttered Ginny, as she imagined casting a worried expression, as if she was checking to see if Daphne heard. The three of them were in on the entire scheme. She saw the frown on Ron’s face, but there was no further reaction other than that.

In fact, right at that moment, Dumbledore approached the Hospital Wing. Hermione gave him a bit of a disapproving look but chose not to go any further than that. She felt that he was part of the reason why Harry was how he was not, by his own meddling and than refusing to correct the problems. He might have had his reasons, but they turned out to be slightly uninformed. Hermione still respected him as a great wizard and her Headmaster, but because of Harry, she felt he dropped the ball.

“And what are you doing here, Headmaster?” asked Daphne coolly, with forced politeness. She knew Dumbledore had monitored the tests of Azkaban and could have broken though whatever Voldemort had done if he really wanted to. That is, if he was the wizard that everyone says he was and if he was one that Voldemort feared.

“Just merely checking up on Harry, it is unfortunate the beating that he suffered, but his miraculous survival, despite all logic pointing towards the fact this is would be his final day given the magical beating he suffered at the hands of Lord Voldemort,” responded Dumbledore and there were several curious looks. “I managed to access the monitoring records of Azkaban and watched the battle. It was like a broomstick crashing to the ground at the speed of magic. It’s horrifying but at the same time, intriguing to watch. Harry managed to hold his own a bit more than I would have expected against Voldemort, given the fact he continues to refuse to acknowledge the power that he had that would enable Voldemort’s final defeat but that’s getting off the subject....”

“Please get to the point Headmaster,” stated Daphne as she refused to take her eyes off of him. She would not put it past him to put some kind of enchantment on Harry to keep him under control, to take advantage of his weakened state.

“Yes, Miss Greengrass, forgive me, an old man tends to ramble at times,” said Dumbledore and Daphne just took the briefest of seconds to roll her eyes. Dumbledore was as mentally as sharp as ever, he just used the eccentric old man act as a mask to lure people into a false sense of security. Granted, there were some aspects where he was as misguided but he still retained his intellect. “Voldemort did a number on Harry with more than a few dangerous

curses; it was only because of sheer force of will that Harry. Knocking him through any number of walls did not help with young Harry's situation and then, the unexpected happened. Something that is so inconceivable, I scarcely believed it, had I not seen it with my own two eyes. I actually backtracked on the monitoring records to ensure I had seen it properly, that there were no spells aiding in this event."

Dumbledore paused for the briefest of seconds. Once again, it was something that he scarcely believed.

"The roof of the prison caved in on Voldemort," said Dumbledore and the children exchanged several disbelieving glares. Daphne just frowned briefly, as if recalling something but Hermione interjected in.

"But, Professor Dumbledore, surely if Harry was smashed into the walls, it would be reasonable to think that the ceiling could cave it, due to nothing really holding it up," stated Hermione but Dumbledore just responded with a nod.

"Perhaps if it was a Muggle building, but the ceiling of Azkaban has been enchanted to remain up on its own, even if the walls were smashed, of course, it would take a very powerful act to smash the walls," responded Dumbledore with a thoughtful expression as he looked at the battered form of Harry. He would survive but what happened really did a number on Harry. "The curious thing is that the ceiling only caved in where Voldemort was standing and then the floor caved in, bringing him to the bottom floor of Azkaban. When the Aurors got there, Voldemort was gone."

"I can't believe it happened again," muttered Daphne under her breath and Dumbledore's eyes snapped up towards her with a suspicious look in his eyes.

"Mind sharing what happened again with the rest of us?" encouraged Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well when the Death Eaters boarded the train, Harry fought them as you know, but one of the followers had attempted to fire a Killing Curse at him, but the luggage rack, collapsed, right on top of the Death Eater, I figure it might have killed him but Harry never really

mentioned it,” replied Daphne and Dumbledore was as confused as ever.

“Let me guess, the luggage racks on the train are charmed to stay up no matter what,” responded Luna.

“Indeed, Miss Lovegood, I need to check on some things,” stated Dumbledore quickly, as he moved off in the other direction. There were a number of explanations that swam through his mind, but few of them made any sense. Then again, what did in the Wizarding World. Madam Pomfrey turned.

“Just a second Albus, you wanted to know what Mr. Potter’s condition was,” stated Madam Pomfrey and Dumbledore stopped, he had nearly left. “He’ll pull through, but he has a number of physical injuries and mental trauma based on the curses that You-Know-Who placed on him during the battle. I managed to relieve him of some of the damage, but the best healer is time and it will be a long road ahead for him. When he awakens, only time will tell what his state of mind would. There could be little damage, but he could wake up as a completely different person.”

“Yes, only time will tell,” agreed Dumbledore calmly. “Harry’s survived more than I could ever imagine anyone his age going through...”

“Professor Dumbledore, Harry’s gone!” shouted Hermione suddenly as they look over. Sure enough, the bed that was occupied a few seconds ago, was completely empty. In fact, there was no hint that Harry had ever been there. Dumbledore moved over, waving his wand.

“Portkey trail, but it’s been masked, I can’t follow it,” muttered Dumbledore as Madam Pomfrey looked at him.

“He was in no condition to even leave his bed,” responded Madam Pomfrey as she bit her lip in frustration.

“The castle must have helped Harry leave his bed,” stated Dumbledore nonchalantly. “Keep an eye out for him, I’ll inform the

other teachers of his movement, I doubt Harry could have gone too far, even with added help.”

Dumbledore turned and walked off, in frustration, but he had more than one problem to worry about. Ginny turned and followed Ron and Hermione, who were talking in low tones, trying to cut her out.

“You know, there was really no way Harry could have moved, in his condition,” remarked Neville.

“Unless that’s what Harry wanted us to think,” said Luna knowingly. “I mean, I know he got battered by You-Know-Who, but...Harry has to done the impossible more than once and looks to have done so again.”

Daphne just nodded calmly. What she wanted to know is why these accidents kept happening to people attempting to kill Harry and why Dumbledore seemed so spooked by them. She doubted that even Harry knew and was not really complaining about it either.

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“My life has always been one filled with turmoil and trauma,” muttered Harry as he laid on a couch in the Room of Requirement. “I suspect it started the exact moment I was born. It was under the specter of that infernal Prophecy. I know it by heart, it’s haunted me, the fact that I have to defeat Voldemort or die trying. And believe me, I think it will be the latter at the rate, I’m going, but you and I, we’re going to have to decide exactly how to rectify that situation. Voldemort is a product of circumstances just as I am. The Wizarding World has turned me into a hero that I never will live up to. Trust me, I’ve tried, it’s not happening. Being the nice Gryffindor has not gotten me anywhere. Playing the hero as Hermione astutely pointed out last year, is only going to get myself and others killed. Most likely myself, given the fact that I gave everything I had to fight Voldemort and it simply wasn’t enough. But somehow, through some sadistic act of faith, I have to keep fighting but what in the hell am I fighting more? My friends, the few that remain, I suppose, that’s something to fight for, I guess, it’s something I justified.”

Harry closed his eyes, breathing in and out heavily, as he glanced up towards the ceiling, as if wishing the very answers to the mysteries of life be etched on it.

“The Wizarding World is infected by a plague that is terminal, it’s not just this country, but everything and Voldemort is just one symptom of an overall problem that has plagued everything, but damn, if he’s not the most obvious and the most dangerous,” babbled Harry, a crazed expression flickering in his eyes. “I thought I loved the Wizarding World but it has not loved me back. I’m a whore, busting my arse for gratification, doing everything for it but getting nothing in return. This damn world sees me as nothing more than a plaything, for it’s own sickening amusement. I’ve beginning to detest it. Harry Potter is a hero, Harry Potter is a tragic savior, Harry Potter is twisted and potentially disturbed, Harry Potter is the next dark wizard in training, Harry Potter is disturbed, but heroic, Harry Potter is the Chosen One who will deliver us are. Never considered to be a person, just a tool for entertainment purposes, for their own sick desires. I’m not a bloody celebrity, to be one of those; I would be one who sought out my fame. I just want to be left alone. Why won’t those bastards just leave me alone?”

Harry sat up just enough to rock back and forth, before he began tugging on his hair, before his features contorted into a sick twisted grin, before he collapsed back down.

“My parents switched Secret Keepers, Dumbledore said he did not know, but Dumbledore’s a two faced bastard, he was the one who performed the charm, that was the evidence that he gave, I know that for a fact, Azkaban didn’t break Sirius, he still believed in Dumbledore to an extent, but he had his doubts, I just wished he would have realized them before it was too late,” stated Harry as he breathed in and out. “My parents...they didn’t need to die. They were just pawns sacrificed in this never ending chess game between the dark and the light. Both sides are corrupt, it’s just that the dark is more honest about being manipulative bastards. Still, Mum, Dad, I would join you but it would solve nothing. Someone has to hold the Wizarding World accountable for their actions. Mum, you especially, the world would be a better place if you survived. Lily, you were truly a flower in the toxic, putrid landfill that is the Wizarding World. And Dad, you were

quite the bastard when you were at Hogwarts, but I'll take Sirius and Remus at their words that you changed. I think Mum wouldn't have married you anyway if she had not seen something worthy in you. And you were too Gryffindor to try anything underhanded. It's a shame you trusted Dumbledore to protect you but that's water under the bridge now. You're on the other side, hopefully raising hell in the afterlife with Sirius. I promise, I'll send Peter straight to hell for what he did soon enough."

Harry turned back, lips forming a twisted, bitter smile.

"Enough about my parents, I barely knew them, but let's talk about my childhood, I was sent to people who hated magic in all forms," stated Harry. "The Dursleys they taught me a valuable lesson. Not all Muggles are worthy of sticking your neck out for. In fact, some are prejudiced bastards and deserve everything they get from Riddle and his not so merry men. But you got it in the hand. After all the sharp words, after all the beatings from Dudley and his little gang that my charming relations turned a blind eye to, after all the sleepless nights in my cupboard with no food or water, you've got it. The goblins can be sadistic. Leaving the punishment in their hands was the best thing that I could have asked for. Still, what does not kill me, usually succeeds in warping my state of mind later on but the point being is, the Dursleys were a chapter of my life that I'm happy to close for good."

Harry took a deep breath, as if contemplating something.

"The first ten years of my life was a living hell, but things looked to get better once I learned I was a wizard and I was accepted at Hogwarts," said Harry. "Boy was I ever a fool."

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"Headmaster, I had no idea of the Dark Lord's plan to trap Potter in Azkaban, he had not mentioned it but it appears that more than a few people are better intertwined in the loop than I had thought," stated Snape as he sat down in the chair of Dumbledore's office.

“More than a few indeed, Severus, Harry had to battle with not only the vast majority of the Inner Circle, but several dozen other Death Eaters, pretty much everyone who had been entombed in Azkaban,” responded Dumbledore. “The Ministry investigated the situation, they’ve determined it was an anomaly, and have taken steps to take control of the prison. The Death Eaters, the one’s that had not escaped, had been returned to their cells. There are a couple of points regarding how Harry handled the battle that quite worry me and its beginning to happen as I feared.”

“I’ve been worried about Potter since the day I’ve met the brat,” muttered Snape but Dumbledore just shot him a reproachful glare.

“I did not mention this in front of the older children, but Harry’s Patronus has evolved so to speak, given his newly found magical capabilities, namely it is not able to knock Dementors unconscious, for lack of a better term,” stated Dumbledore. “It was always feared that Harry would have power beyond anything ever imagined, but this is one of those pieces of proof. The Ministry tried in vain to hush up the matter, but there are people there who are scared to death. A boy who has the ability to render Dementors unconscious is quite the frightening sight. If his powers evolve, likely when he becomes of age, he will be powerful enough to conjure a Patronus that could destroy even the most powerful Dementor.”

“This is just a theory Headmaster,” stated Snape.

“Yes, but it’s quite an unfortunate side effect that my theories tend to be rather on the mark more often than not,” commented Dumbledore lightly, but he leaned back, some frustration appearing on his face. “There is another matter, as in the matter of the night that Lord Voldemort murdered Lily and James and tried to kill Harry...”

“I thought you had determined that Lily’s had created some kind of shield powered by a sacrifice that would shield the boy from the Killing Curse and repel it back at him,” stated Snape in a calm voice. “Of course, Potter is dense enough to believe that a simple sacrifice of love would be enough to repel the Killing Curse but this is...”



“Harry is figuring out the flaw in that argument but he can’t be allowed to make the connection, for the sake of the world, he must make a selfless sacrifice of his own in the end,” remarked Dumbledore and Snape looked confused, but Dumbledore pressed on, not willing to explain any further. “Still, given the fact that Lily was a prodigy in the field of charms, I had wondered if she had done something else before she fell to Voldemort. Cast some other charm on Harry, that would cause him to somehow survive encounters that by all logic he should have died.”

“I suspect there are charms, I do know of a few, many of them are considered a bit towards the dark end of the magical spectrum,” said Snape in a calm voice. “What brought you to this wondrous conclusion, Headmaster?”

“During Harry’s battle with Lord Voldemort, he was near death, Voldemort was just one breath away from casting the Killing Curse and suddenly the ceiling of Azkaban caved in, not to mention the floor, which brought Voldemort down to the bottom of Azkaban,” stated Dumbledore in a calm voice and Snape looked at him with a disbelieving glare.

“Please tell you were mistaken, the Potter boy was delirious when he told you,” said Snape.

“No, I’m afraid not, Miss Greengrass let word of a similar incident on the Hogwarts Express slip and there were other encounters over the years that lend credibility,” stated Dumbledore calmly. “Still, Lily, performing magic that was dark on her son, to guarantee his survival, is rather barbaric and quite out of character for her.”

“Yes, so states the man who forces a child to return home so he can renew a loyalty oath,” responded Snape dryly. “Don’t get too caught up in the idealistic picture that you’ve painted of both of them. Lily had a darker side and she could be quite violent when provoked. Take Potter’s temper at his worst and multiply it by about twenty...”

“I get the point Severus,” stated Dumbledore.

“The point is, The Dark Lord extended his hand to her, asking for her to join his cause, he cared little about the blood, but rather the power he could control,” stated Snape. “I think Lily must have considered it one of the last time, but Potter in his infinite wisdom had a violent reaction and attacked the Death Eaters who had offered them a chance to join the ranks. The Dark Lord was willing to tolerate Potter, to get Lily...”

“You’ve told me this years ago Severus, I remember it well but I doubt Lily for one second considered joining Voldemort was the best thing, she is the type of person most of his followers hated...” stated Dumbledore.

“It is wildly believed that many would not have known Lily was Muggleborn, given the way she acted, she did not read a few books and assumed she knew the world, unlike young Miss Granger for instance,” stated Snape. “She kept her head low, but she learned a lot that way. She was unwilling to draw attention to herself. She acted like...”

“Like many purebloods,” responded Dumbledore in a knowing voice. “Or rather what many purebloods see themselves as but the day is late. We can go back and forth on what Lily truly was or wasn’t, but it matters little. What Harry appears to be turning into is a cause of concern, the fact that the Greengrass girl grows closer to him is most alarming.”

“The staff was in an uproar when Potter was missing,” commented Snape lightly. “McGonagall looked like she was going to tear you into pieces when she realized that the boy escaped under your nose. If you asked me, he’s too arrogant to even acknowledge that he needs help...”

“Do back off on your sharp tongue towards Harry for the moment, Severus,” said Dumbledore in a warning tone of voice. “Harry’s temperament is quite unstable at the moment. If pushed a bit too far, he could lash out in a way. Especially considering he now knows who was the person who overheard the prophecy...”

“You told him, Dumbledore,” said Snape.

"I didn't tell him, but he guessed, once again one of the things I was hoping to avoid until the time was right," stated Dumbledore. "Still, do try and ease up on your antagonism on Harry just a little bit. I would hate for this to end in tragedy."

Snape just nodded, he refused to back down from the Potter boy if pushed and the boy was pushing him. Like it or not, Snape had little power over Potter.

"Can't we just put him inside a warded room at St. Mungos?" asked Snape.

"If only the solution to this problem was that simple but alas, it's not," said Dumbledore in a calm voice with a look that indicated that he was finished with this conversation.

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"Hagrid was the one who retrieved me from the Dursleys, a move that makes little sense but at the same time, makes all of the sense in the world, I mean Hagrid, bless him, wouldn't hurt anything willingly, but he was a simple man, he is the perfect person to follow Dumbledore's agenda to the letter, to poison me against Slytherin from the start, where I would have been surrounded by people who would have made it clear of what rights I had, still Hagrid did liberate me, so I thank him, but I'm just quite sure I've forgiven him for Norbert or Fluffy or Aragog or Grawp or anything I've really encountered thanks to Hagrid," said Harry but he sighed. "I met Malfoy, that did a good deal in making me hate Slytherins, his foul little face. I want to slap the taste out of his mouth. Then, the platform, right before school, Hagrid did not inform of how exactly to get on the platform. And by some stroke of luck, Molly Weasley ask what number the platform was out loud. I asked Ginny, she said that was the only time she ever remembered her mother doing that, but I suppose I'll give Molly the benefit of the doubt this time. She's a pawn in this game, albeit a more willing one. The Weasleys, what's to say, the vast majority of them are puppets of the light. Except for Ginny and maybe the twins, Ron might be coming around, but he has a choice to make and I don't even know if he has the nerve to take the decisive steps."

Harry brushed his hair out of his face, before he rocked back and forth, an irritated glance on his face.

“Hermione, I met her as well, saved her from a troll, and she mysteriously finds some piece of information that allows us to solve a mystery, in of a stretch really, but I bet Dumbledore managed to slip her that information and modified her memory to make her think she found it on her own, in fact, I wouldn’t be surprised, given what we’ve learned about Dumbledore, in fact Hermione seems to come up with some brilliant plan at most curious times, she’s dancing on Dumbledore’s strings as well,” said Harry. “The Philosopher’s Stone, not the real deal, but that’s far beside the point. The tasks were absurdly stupid. If I was Voldemort, I would be insulted that Dumbledore put these absurdly easy tasks, that a group of three years could get past. Besides, if Dumbledore really wanted to protect the Philosopher’s Stone, he should have filled all of the bottoms with poison. That would have taken care of anyone after the Stone. Then I fought Quirell...one more thing, if Dumbledore was such a great wizard, why didn’t he discover that Lord Fucking Voldemort was growing out of the back of the heads of one of his teachers. He’s either insanely stupid or so blatantly manipulative if it isn’t funny. And we both know what one that is. Then as my reward for risking both my life and the lives of my friends, I am put in the Hospital Wing, for Dumbledore to tell me nothing.”

Harry turned his head up, as he looked off into the distance, at nothing in particular, before he sank down, in a broken battered heap.

“Second year, Dobby and that mess with the pudding, I’m sure Dumbledore could have had that cleared up if he really wanted to, but he decided not too and I think the events of the summer before my fifth year explained why that was, then I was rescued by the Weasleys, bars on my window, the whole nine yards and all that rubbish, no one really cared, other than a couple of comments by the twins that quickly got shushed by Molly but to her credit, I don’t think she really approved of the Dursleys much at all,” stated Harry before he paused. “I wonder if it was because they were worthless piles of dragon dung or because they were Muggles. Who knows, quite frankly I don’t really care.”

Harry cleared his throat, eyes glazed over.

“Both you and I realize what happened, Ginny and the diary, poor Ginny, she was so innocent back then, now she’s almost as jaded as I am because of her experiences, but I hope for her sake that she doesn’t reach that level, perhaps something could have developed, but I’ll never know and besides I have a girl right now that I’m content with, don’t quite know if I’m in love or not, the Dursleys have me so messed up, I doubt I can really ever feel true love,” stated Harry. “But still Daphne’s great and I’m sure anyone else would have been good, given what happened. Ginny included, but I don’t want to waste too much time. Anyway, she was one of those who had built up a hero in her mind that I could never live up to. To her credit, she has gotten better, mostly after she had her ordeal with the diary. I triumphed over the Basilisk, must have been about two hundred feet long with razor sharp fangs. I beat Riddle, saved Ginny, mind wiped Lockhart, I could be here all day about him but I won’t spare him more than a breath of my time, and was something vaguely resembling a hero once again. Yet, rewarded with nothing. Okay, almost nothing, two hundred points and some vanity award that’s collecting dust in the Hogwarts Trophy Case right now. See there’s justice for you, I should have gotten a ticker tape parade but instead a stupid award, some points to a pointless house cup, and a brief article in the Daily Prophet, mentioning that Harry Potter had triumphed over the monster of the Chamber of Secrets, wedged between a Zonko’s and Flourish and Blotts ad. Really, though I’m not bitter, really I’m not.”

Harry leaned back, biting his lip in frustration as he recalled his third year.

“Third year, really do I have to go over this, yes, I understand, it’s part of my therapy but it just makes me want to strangle Dumbledore when I’ve figured out what he’s done, he tried to keep you locked up after all, because he was afraid of you,” stated Harry but he quickly shook his head. “I will say one thing, giving a student a time turner just to attend a couple of extra classes is a really fucking stupid idea. And given how it came in handy, it’s only slightly less stupid. One statement in particular, makes me want to strangle Dumbledore in retrospective. His crock and bull statement about not having the

power to make other men see reason but yet it was his word that was a factor in imprisoning Sirius in the first place. Albus Dumbledore, you my friend, are a lying dipshit.”

Harry just smiled, having gotten that off of his chest.

“Fourth year, was that a year to remember,” stated Harry. “You know the more I think about this, I have to marvel how brilliant Dumbledore is to keep my mind so restrained from logical thought and not see through this but I must press on. Fourth year...The Triwizard Tournament...fun times.”

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Lord Voldemort was not too happy given the humiliating defeat that he suffered just hours ago. As a matter of fact, he was completely raving and out of his mind, angered beyond belief. Voldemort saw himself as the greatest wizard that ever lived and to have him stalled by such dubious circumstances, angered him beyond belief. Granted, Potter was beaten worse than the boy was likely to have ever been beaten before but any battle that ended without his opponent being buried six feet under.

The only thing that gave Voldemort some amount of satisfaction was the fact that the Ministry were still blundering twits and had returned his followers to Azkaban. That was only to last as long as Potter was indisposed, because while the fools at the Ministry did not have the mental capacity to put the pieces together, it was likely that Potter would. Dumbledore might have guessed but he was unwilling to rock the boat. He was never willing to do what was necessary.

“Give me one reason why I should not slaughter each and every one of you in cold blood for your gross incompetence,” hissed Voldemort in his most dangerous voice. Some of the Death Eaters near the front winced, they could almost feel the venom. “Fifty, sixty, who knows how many Death Eaters, and one brat, one underage wizard, who did not even use his own wand, managed to defeat each and every one of you until I showed up. Pathetic, Lord Voldemort wonders why he keeps any of you around.”

"But my Lord, he excelled at wandless magic..." stated Avery

"But my Lord, he excelled at wandless magic," repeated Voldemort in a whiny, sing song voice. "Lord Voldemort is not impressed by parlor tricks. In fact, that boy has managed to cheat his fate once again."

Lord Voldemort turned, placing a hand on his forehead, looking agitated.

"I blame myself for this, I should not have not sent incompetent minions to do a Dark Lord's job," responded Voldemort.

"My Lord, respectfully speaking, why did you just strike Potter down with a Killing Curse from behind?" asked Klea Shae. "It's so unoriginal to give some rambling monologue and give your opponent a chance to fight back..."

"You have no sense of drama," said Voldemort coldly. "Any wizard can kill someone from attacking them from behind. A powerful wizard is someone who utterly humiliates their opponent in a duel. Of course, I suppose it is rather old as well for my minions to bungle all of my operations."

"Actually it is just like it is to blame them for your...setbacks," said Klea Shae.

"Are you ever satisfied, Mr. Shae?" stated Voldemort coldly, before he turned but decided he would not kill anyone yet, not today. "Each and every one of you are on your last chance. You will find that Lord Voldemort is a forgiving man but there is a limit to my tolerance. Next time Lord Voldemort tells you to do something, I expect a one hundred and ten percent effort and complete success."

"Actually isn't it impossible to give more than one hundred per..." stated one of the Death Eaters but a jet of green light had struck him dead in the middle of his criticism.

"Dismissed," hissed Voldemort coldly. "Get out of my sight, immediately."

The Death Eaters scrambled to leave, not wanting to be left alone with their master.

“Idiots,” hissed Voldemort in disgust, as he winced. He still had a few minor injuries but they would heal. His hatred for Potter on the other hand, would be something that remained.

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“The Goblet of Fire, it just really pisses me off, given what Daphne told me about magically binding contracts,” remarked Harry. “You know, if it was that easy to get someone under a magically binding contract, I could just forge Lucius Malfoy’s name in a document, signing over the entire Malfoy family fortune to me but that would not be. As it turns out, since I never signed my name, I was never obligated to compete in the tournament. Dumbledore knew I bet. So did Crouch, but he was put under the Imperius Curse, so I suspect he was forbidden to say. Bagman...don’t know about him, he was a fool in his own way, trying to swindle the goblins. If they ever catch up with him, his head will be on a pike somewhere, perhaps as a trophy for a senior goblin at Gringotts. Just like if Dumbledore ever foolishly walks out. Still, speaking of Dumbledore, once again we have another situation where either suggestions grand incompetence or being a manipulative bastard. Dumbledore and Moody were supposed to be old friends but yet Dumbledore never caught on once. What kind of fool do you think I am, Albus? You knew, but you decided to step back. Of course, Crouch Junior was not the brightest bulb in the box either. It would have been easy to just transform a piece of homework into a Portkey and hand it to me after class. Then again, Riddle must have insisted it had to happen during the third task. He does have a grand sense of theatrics and has to do the most dramatic thing possible. He just had to use a Killing Curse when I was a baby, he couldn’t have just drowned me or sliced my throat. Not that I’m complaining, just saying.”

Harry turned, looking forward, before he pressed his hand on his forehead.

“Voldemort returned, Fudge doesn’t believe it, it doesn’t occur to either Fudge or Dumbledore to ask me for a Pensieve memory or to



swear to the events of that graveyard under Veritaserum, now that I know what happened, Dumbledore deliberately tried to paint himself to me as the only person I could rely on, he allowed himself to lose power, knowing that he would gain it back, just because he's Dumbledore," stated Harry. "And the Dementors...that should have never been brought to court. Guilty until proven innocent you know, but Dumbledore showed little worry, because he knew I would get off. Then the Daily Prophet, by all rights, as a member of the fifteen original families, I could have sued them for the slander they wrote against me. As Daphne rightly pointed out, I wished I was sorted in Slytherin, personal opinions on the house from the majority of the world be damned. At least I might have had people who might have helped me towards these conclusions, even if it might be for their own benefit. Still not crying over spilled potion, really I'm not."

Harry leaned up, eyes staring blankly at the ceiling.

"This was a year that really messed me up, to be honest, with Umbridge and all, my hand was carved open each and every night, and out of some misguided sense of nobility, I refused to get any help, what a boneheaded move the more I think of it," stated Harry. "Dumbledore once again refuses to do anything that is well within his power of doing. I know it was well within his rights to remove the Ministry influence from Hogwarts, but I'm not really too broken up about Dumbledore's inaction. This was one time where in the end it worked out in my favor. It allowed me to be the undisputed ruler of Hogwarts, so that's fun, given the fact I can't be touched. Umbridge got hers to. I got banned for Quidditch. If I knew that was going to happen, I would have separated Malfoy's head from his body, to make it really worth it but it's not like I give a damn about Quidditch. Then there's that entire Department of Mysteries thing...Sirius died, I've thought about this enough to make me sick. I bet anything that Sirius was beginning to question Dumbledore and naturally the control freak couldn't have that. Then after I see the closest thing I've ever had to a family member die, Dumbledore decides to finally tell me the Prophecy. All those years wasted, at that time, those little protections he put were beginning to fail, because even a mentally repressed person such as myself had began to see through the lies. Daphne showed up by chance and it was good thing. I think we helped each other. It doesn't exactly hurt that she's gorgeous and

extremely intelligent as well. Resourceful as well, it's just a shame that I'm not going to be as committed as I would like to be because of my other obligations. Good thing that Daphne seems to understand that. I guess she sees the benefits of our arrangement."

Harry took a deep breath.

"My recent failure against Voldemort, at least determined one thing and that is that Voldemort has control of Azkaban, of course I bet every Knut I have that the Ministry wouldn't come to the same conclusion that I do and send them right back into Azkaban, without even another thought and Dumbledore, I think he's more worried about bringing me under control for my own good," stated Harry in a calm voice, before he took a pained breath. "Doesn't matter, because the next Death Eaters I face, won't be sent to Azkaban, they will be sent straight to the morgue."

Harry paused.

"There's an overview of my Hogwarts years in a nutshell, I don't know why you wanted to know but there you go," responded Harry as he paused. "My life in all its messed up glory, if glory is the right word but all those times, justice seems to be denied and despite my noblest intentions, I get no respect."

There was a silence, as if Harry was expecting someone to answer him. The nod of his head indicated that his answer was reached, even though it was unheard by anyone.

"I know what I must do right now, yes you're right, I'm a fool thinking that I can save this world from itself," stated Harry. "This Wizarding World can't be saved, it's the impossible dream. It's beyond help. I can't win. The plague infecting this world is terminal. It can't be reversed. Therefore it must be destroyed. Obliterated, my destiny is to put the Wizarding World out of its misery, not just because of Voldemort and his followers, although that seems like an excellent place to start, but every single level of corruption. They will all die, only the innocent, the very few, will be destroyed. I thought my scheme with the Defense Against the Dark Arts would taper the

problems, but there too far reaching to be cured by a derailed Hogwarts education.”

Harry rocked back and forth, tugging on his hair, cackling madly.

“Dumbledore, Voldemort, the Ministry, soon they will know true terror, they want to see fear, well they can see what I’m capable of,” stated Harry in a sadistic whisper. “Because Harry Potter was nothing but a spineless little petulant whining pussy, who survived based on luck and the right timing, he’s useless against Voldemort. He is destined to fail again and again when it truly accounts. He has petulant and against any normal wizard, he could wipe the floor with them. The problem with Harry Potter is that he cares too much.”

Harry turned around, a tranquil look on his face.

“Harry Potter is a good friend of mine, but he’s broken, too busted up to do this any more, his latest encounter with Voldemort proved this, by the beating he gave Potter, only saved by a stroke of luck, handy, but rather frustrating to know that a one in a million chance was the only thing that saved Harry from death, that’s caused him to crack just a little bit,” said Harry eyes widened. “Much like Tom Marvolo Riddle became Lord Voldemort, I need a name that will strike fear into the hearts and minds of the Wizarding World.”

Harry paused, looking rather thoughtful, recalling something that Dumbledore told me a short time ago.

“You said the path I would go on could lead to my downfall,” stated Harry in a sadistic tone of voice. “Downfall, that name speaks to me. It seems like it might have been done before, but...such is life.”

Harry just responded with a shrug before he looked calm and sedated.

“I hope you regret what you’ve unleashed,” stated Harry in a slightly terrified, but at the same time, slightly excited tone of voice. “Bye, bye, Wizarding World. It’s been real. It’s been fun. But I can’t say it’s been really fun.”

I know, I know, I know, I KNOW DAMNIT! But I’m not changing it.

Next Chapter, Death Eaters pay(figuratively and literally) for their crimes against Harry Potter, Daphne and Harry have moments, Dumbledore and Harry have words over Harry's very public declaration that he's retiring from being the savior of the Wizarding World(yes, he can do that, because he's Harry Potter), and Ginny and Hermione have words. Oh and Voldemort has a new toy that I'm sure is going to infuriate a lot of people who take Harry Potter fan fiction way too seriously. :)

## Chapter Fourteen: The Downfall of Harry Potter:

Daphne stood outside of the Great Hall. There was no word on where Harry had ended up. She suspected he was healing somewhere, in a place where Dumbledore could not tamper him. Astoria stood over by the Slytherin table, in a bad mood.

"I hope Harry recovers soon enough, Malfoy's becoming unbearable without Harry to keep him in check," stated Astoria and Daphne nodded. Malfoy seemed to be a bit less arrogant when Harry was around. Perhaps it was all the times Harry had beaten him in a mock duel, perhaps it was all the detentions that Harry had put Malfoy in, most of them given by Snape to Harry in a moment of foolishness.

"He'll be back soon enough, but he did suffer a beating, emotional and physical trauma, everything, he may never be the same again," said Daphne in a sigh, she looked rather helpless for a brief second but she quickly hid the look. Neville and Luna looked to have no information.

"Potter finally was beaten so badly by the Dark Lord, he stuck his nose in his business for the last time," said Draco to his gang of sycophants in a pompous voice. "I bet you anywhere he's somewhere dying, but Dumbledore's trying to cut it up, acting like he doesn't know where Potter is. Afraid that the Dark Lord will finish the job, most likely, Potter is beaten..."

"You know Malfoy, I wouldn't be bragging too much, without seeing the body," stated Daphne calmly. "At least if you had any sense, like a true Slytherin would be."

"Mind your tongue around me, blood traitor, things are going to change around here without Potter to play the protective savior," said Malfoy in a taunting tone of voice. "He won't be able to exercise his supposed power, not that he ever truly beaten me. I allowed him to, out of some sense of pity, knowing that the Dark Lord would destroy him in the end..."

"Malfoy," cautioned Theodore Nott as he looked over the shoulder of his fellow Slytherin sixth year and saw the unsmiling form of Harry

Potter standing right behind Draco. "Not to try and tell you what to do..."

"Nor should you Nott, because my family's richer than yours," stated Malfoy pompously.

"Potter's behind you, Draco," muttered Pansy in an urgent voice.

"Pansy, you have a horrid sense of humor," stated Draco but Harry reached forward and tapped Draco on the shoulder. "Potter...you're alive!"

"Yes, I figured that out the moment I began to breathe again after passing out," responded Harry dryly. "It's nice to know that you're capable of better Mr. Malfoy, so the next time we're in class, we're having a duel, a wandless duel, since you seem to be better than I had assumed. Remember, no holding back Malfoy, I want to experience what Draco Malfoy is fully capable of."

Malfoy looked like someone had punched him in the stomach with an iron glove and even a few of the Slytherins looked amused, as Harry turned to Daphne, who was regarding him with a frown, as if she had some questions for him that she wanted answered immediately, but Harry just looked back at her with a smile.

"Morning, beautiful," said Harry as he leaned forward and gave Daphne a brief kiss. She froze, Harry had never been this forward. Madam Pomfrey did say that Harry would be changed drastically because of his experience with Voldemort but at the same time, she had never expected anything like this.

"You seem jovial for someone who came close to dying the other day," responded Daphne calmly, before she turned to Harry, as he gripped her hand. "What happened to keeping our relationship seriously?"

"Actually technically there wasn't a relationship, remember, we agreed that signaled that we would expect too much commitment," responded Harry and Daphne just nodded calmly, that was true, that's what they agreed to. "Still, things change, there are times

where perspectives changes, when I give thought to something. Why should I keep my relationship with a such a gorgeous girl secret?"

"I believe, as you said, You-Know-Who would use me as a target to get to you, people would degrade me, pester me, all sorts of excuses, basically until you were done with You-Know, you didn't have a life," responded Daphne as they walked over towards the Gryffindor table. "Did I nail all the excuses?"

"Pretty much, Daphne," stated Harry. "But Voldemort won't be a problem any longer..."

"Yes, considering that you got put through a wall several times and escaped by the skin of your teeth, the last time and are in this condition," stated Daphne.

"Nearly every bone in my body broken, some of them not able to be healed by magic, I'm on a number of pain relief potions right now," confirmed Harry with a nod, as they sat down at the Gryffindor table, several of the Gryffindors giving Daphne disgusted stares as if she was something putrid. "Anyone complains about this lovely young lady being at the Gryffindor table, I'll throw you in Detention for the rest of this year."

Without another word, Harry sat himself down at the Gryffindor table, right beside Daphne. Neville nodded from a bit off to the side, as Luna gave him a smile from the Ravenclaw table, before she resumed her usual dreamy expression, looking off into space, as Harry saw Ginny out of the corner of his eye, who nodded. It was time to continue the plan that Harry, Ginny, and Daphne had come up with, to fool her mother and Dumbledore that Ginny was still firmly on their side and not having seen the light, regarding Harry's side.

"Hi, Harry," said Ginny as she slid over in a bubbly voice, as she slid over to be close to Daphne. Daphne gave her a slight frown, playing her part in this little charade nicely. "I'm so glad that you got better, I was so worried."

"Don't worry, now I'm better," said Harry in a distant voice as he turned slightly away to return to his food, but he watched out of the

corner Ginny, as she made sure that Hermione, who was watching the situation from off to the side with suspicion, slip something in Harry's drink. Harry turned away from Daphne, as he held his drink, with a frown.

"What's wrong Harry?" asked Daphne as she continued to give Ginny a slight glare, but it was hard to keep a straight face giving Ginny's overdramatic acting. The sad thing was that Granger was buying the entire thing hook, line, and sinker, and there were a few other girls giggling as well.

"Pumpkin juice seems a bit off, but I'm sure it's nothing," said Harry, as he turned towards Ginny who had cleared her throat. "Yes, may I help you?"

"I was wondering, if you could give me some private tutoring Harry, you know in your office alone, there's just something that I need help with, one thing, it won't take too much time at all," remarked Ginny, fluttering her eyelashes in an overly dramatic manner, giving Harry a smile but Harry looked unfazed. "Please Harry, you wouldn't want me to be put in danger..."

"Ginny, I'm sure if you're having trouble with something, you can bring it up in class, that's what it's there for, besides there might be other people who might be having the same problem," stated Harry. "Don't worry, ask your question and I'll make sure the entire class, I have other things I need to do, I can't give anyone special treatment."

"Please Harry, you know how much this would mean to me," breathed Ginny, as Daphne ducked down, under the guise of retrieving a piece of silverware because she could no longer keep a straight face.

"Sorry, Ginny, no can do," stated Harry in a final voice, as Ginny gave him a pouty look, before she turned, to hide the diabolic smirk on her face, before she returned to her food, fully aware of the disapproving look that Hermione was giving her. At that moment, he saw Dumbledore enter the Great Hall and he looked up to see the Headmaster walk forward towards Harry.



“Good morning Harry, I’m glad to see that you’ve survived,” responded Dumbledore in a calm voice.

“I’m sure, you would, that would ruin a lot of your plans, me being dead,” stated Harry. “Since you’re here, I want you to do me a favor. Given that you’re the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, you can call meetings of the Wizengamot.”

“I would under normal circumstances, but since I have been suspended pending further investigation, I’m unable to,” said Dumbledore as he looked at Harry.

“As the heir to one of the fifteen families, you can call meetings of the Wizengamot, Harry,” responded Daphne and Harry nodded.

“Yes, forgot that, but it’s true, I can do that, I’ll send out some letters, telling the Wizengamot to be there in three days, because I have some things to reveal after my battle with Voldemort,” responded Harry and Dumbledore looked on with surprise. “In fact, I’m inviting you to attend the meeting, because it would be something that you wouldn’t want to miss.”

“Your generosity is great Harry, I’ll be certain to attend,” responded Dumbledore. “I understand you have a break period after lunch today...”

“One of two during the week,” agreed Harry. “I had attended to get caught up...”

“Harry, I must insist you come up to my office, I wish to have you scanned for spells, as your mother may have put a powerful charm on you all those years ago, that allowed you to defeat Voldemort in the way you did,” stated Dumbledore.

“I’d have to decline Dumbledore, if you’re offering to do it yourself,” stated Harry. “I was under the impression that Mum’s noble sacrifice was the thing that saved me...”

"That's what I thought too, but I'm not certain right now," said Dumbledore, waving off Harry's concerns. "I do really recommend you have this done, it could be dangerous dark magic..."

"No, you will not be defiling my mother's memory, I simply won't allow it," said Harry coldly. "If she did something, you wouldn't have brought it up, if it didn't interfere with your plans. Therefore I refused to submit to any scan. Just make sure you're at the Wizengamot, because this will be a meeting you won't want to miss."

"I'm sorry you feel this way, Harry," said Dumbledore, who could only suggest, he could not force. It was a shame that Harry still had not learned that his independence could be fatal. Without another word, Dumbledore walked off, thinking about why Harry could have called this meeting. He was offering no hints whatsoever.

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On her break, Ginny made her way back to the Gryffindor Common Room, as Hermione walked up to her, with a determined focused look on her face. Ginny tried to pretend that she did not see Hermione but really this was a confrontation that she was really looking forward too.

"Ginny!" called Hermione in an agitated voice and Ginny turned around, to look at Hermione.

"Yes, Hermione, may I help you?" asked Ginny calmly.

"Don't think I didn't see what you did at Breakfast," said Hermione through gritted teeth. "I would think that you of all people would have not pulled something like that after what happened with the diary. How could you try and mess with someone's emotions like that?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about, Hermione," responded Ginny with faux innocence but this just caused Hermione to take a step forward.

"I'll tell you what I saw, you slipped something into Harry's drink, and I think it was a love potion of some sorts, you've always been obsessed with him, but this is low," responded Hermione as Ginny

responded with a hurtful look. "I can't believe you would do something like this to Harry..."

"Oh like you care, all you seem to do is criticize Harry's every single move anymore," said Ginny in a challenging voice and Hermione looked at her, gritting her teeth in irritation. "At least I'm trying to find a way to make him happiness and he needs a relationship to keep his mind off of Voldemort..."

"All you would be getting with a love potion is a soulless doll, a lifeless puppet, but you wouldn't be getting Harry and you do realize that if Harry ever catches on, this might cause him to crack," said Hermione as she looked at Ginny, angered beyond belief. "It's a good thing that Harry's not exactly bright enough to catch onto your obvious attempts at flirting with him...but it looks like Greengrass is and she looked like she wanted to kill you..."

"Please, as if a slimy Slytherin could get the better of me," said Ginny with a tad bit of arrogance in her voice and Hermione looked at her.

"I swear, you're as bad as Ron sometimes, you don't think, who knows what kind of dark magic she has been dabbling in, she could seriously hurt you," said Hermione as she looked at Ginny. "As much as it pains me to admit it, she does look like she cares for Harry, even though she is a bad influence on him..."

"Please Hermione, someone as smart as should know she doesn't give a damn about Harry, she only cares about her money, because her father's a bloody git who lost her entire family fortune," said Ginny.

"Those are just rumors that have been spread by Malfoy, I wouldn't believe them for one minute," argued Hermione.

"You're just jealous that Harry is someone civilized to me," said Ginny, causing Hermione to look at her with a start. "That's right, you heard me. You were always the person that Harry relied on it and now that you can't boss him around, it's eating you up inside. He's disgusted to even look at you, you're nothing but..."

“Enough, Ginny, as a prefect, I should report you to...” stated Hermione but she trailed off, thinking rather hard. This seemed like a Dumbledore scheme, trying to slip Harry a love potion to keep him under control. “I’ll write to your mother.”

“See if I care,” responded Ginny which was all of the confirmation that Hermione needed that Molly was the one who nudged Ginny into doing this. That woman was so controlling sometimes. “Besides, it’s not like anything’s working...”

“What do you mean?” asked Hermione sharply.

“He’s not even remotely interested in me,” stated Ginny with a sad smile. “He might have a natural immunity to them, just like he does with the Imperius Curse.”

“Figures Harry would break another law of magic,” stated Hermione who had been frustrated many times. Wandless magic was something she could not even grasp. She had not one bit of talent. In fact, Harry hinted that if she did not grasp it, she would be removed down to the remedial program, something that haunted Hermione. If she encountered a Boggart. “If you don’t stop, I will tell Harry.”

“No, please don’t, Hermione, he’ll never speak to me again,” said Ginny in mock horror but Hermione had already walked off.

Ginny just turned, everything was going to plan accordingly. She was sure that wind of their argument would get back to Dumbledore and her mother somehow.

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The Wizengamot was muttering, as they had arrived for this mandatory session. The rumors regarding Harry Potter after his latest battle with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named had ranged from the slightly plausible to the completely outlandish. The fact remained that he was not dead or comatose, given to the fact he had called this meeting. This was the first time he had enacted his rights and right now, Harry arrived with a smug look on his face, but he was not alone. On either side, there was a goblin, with a razor sharp spear, but not that they

needed it. These particular goblins looked like they could rip a man's heart out with their teeth. Following Harry, was a slimy looking character, with glasses and a briefcase. Harry sat down as his goblin bodyguards, loaned out for a small fee, looked at Dumbledore, with sadistic intentions.

"Remember, gentlemen, mounting Dumbledore's head on a wall wasn't something that I paid you for, although once this meeting is over, whatever you do is your own decision, providing you can catch Dumbledore before he escapes the Wizengamot," remarked Harry calmly.

"Ah a challenge," growled one of the goblins and the Minister of Magic arrived. Fudge still somehow had weathered another storm, but perhaps just barely.

"Ah Harry...oh no, it's you," stated Fudge with an apprehensive look. Potter had apparently hired a legal representative and not just any representative, by one of the best and most underhanded in the entire Wizarding World.

"Ah, Cornelius, long time no see," stated the representative. "You remember your old friend, Bernard...."

"We're not friends, after you nearly cleaned me out, giving most of it to my first ex-wife," stated Fudge and the man known as Bernard just smirked.

"Not my fault you had a wandering eye...and a few other body parts as way," stated the man known as Bernard. "But the past is the past, Cornelius, I must say, it's not every day someone gets an owl to represent the Boy-Who-Lived, but it's not about the fame but rather about the gold."

Fudge looked at Harry with a pleading look.

"Sorry, Minister, but you can thank Voldemort for what's about to happen," stated Harry. "And the people who you inherited this mess from, they caused the Wizarding World to be in the state it now. What

happens next...well I do apologize in advance, because I'm not going to be held responsible."

"This meeting of the Wizengamot is now in session," boomed the voice of Amelia Bones. "Mr. Potter, I must admit curiosity of why you had called this meeting..."

"It's very simple, Madam Bones," said Harry politely. "I would like to bring charges of assault and battery upon the Death Eaters who had ruthlessly assaulted me, unprovoked in Azkaban and also charges of libel and mass slander towards the Daily Prophet and the Ministry of Magic."

"Given the evidence that my team and I have been presented, we feel that Mr. Potter is well within his rights," stated Bernard in a slick voice. "We would also like to point out the additional charges of trademark infringement, for a line of Harry Potter related merchandise that was authorized by the Ministry of Magic, but not approved by Mr. Potter. We are appalled to learn that our client has not received one Knut. We would also point out that we would like all the account of Mr. Potter's alleged defeat of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named to be removed from all historical literature. We feel that the events would be unable to be verified due to one person being too young to remember and the other being an insane dark wizard..."

"Actually the curse scar on Harry's head is proof enough," argued Dumbledore.

"There is no precedence for this curse scar, it could have easily been carved in his head by any number of spells, perhaps by Voldemort or maybe by someone who discovered Harry in the wreckage," argued Bernard, as if he dared Dumbledore to respond. To argue this, Dumbledore would have to bring up the Prophecy or Harry's connection to Voldemort and he was unwilling to do either in such a public venue. "Therefore, since there is no proof backing up this alleged incident involving Harry Potter's defeated against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, it should be removed, to prevent fiction being confused with reality..."

“Everyone knows Harry defeated You-Know-Who!” argued Fudge stubbornly.

“Who is everyone, Minister?” asked Bernard. “Perhaps you were an accomplice of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named during the night in question that this event was alleged to happen. That would explain why you appear to know so much...”

“No, I wasn’t there, but there was an official Ministry of Magic investigation that pointed confirmed Albus Dumbledore’s claims,” stated Fudge.

“Which brings us to our next charge, charges being brought against Albus Dumbledore, with the very serious crimes of denying a pureblood heir of one of the fifteen families his rightful heritage and attempting to suppress his magical abilities with a number of potentially fatal wards,” said Bernard. “You are not above the law Albus Dumbledore, what do you have to say for yourself?”

“I was doing what I thought was best for Harry,” stated Dumbledore in a calm voice.

“Yet, what you think is best, might not match up to the law?” asked Bernard. “You do realize that if Harry decides to fully press charges, that you could have your magic bound, your memories removed, and be tossed in a Muggle prison to rot away the rest of your life for such a crime.”

“That is a concern,” agreed Dumbledore.

“Do you have any regrets for what you have done?” asked Bernard.

“No,” stated Dumbledore calmly. “There are things that must be done for the Greater Good and Harry needed to be control. He had powers that he never would have been able to control...”

“The Greater Good, Albus, that reminds me of a certain motto by a certain incarcerated dark wizard that you were alleged to defeat, once again with little proof and another instance of the Ministry taking your word,” responded Bernard but he just smirked. “But that’s another

scandal entirely and I'm here to rectify this matter. The first is the charges against the Death Eaters. The following families will be required to pay an amount of one hundred thousand Galleons to Mr. Potter..."

"That would wipe most of everyone out!" protested a member of the Wizengamot but Bernard just shrugged, before he began to read off a list of names. Fudge seemed to age with each pureblood connection being severed. He caught onto what Potter was doing and there was absolutely nothing that he could do to stop it, especially considering it appeared that the goblins would back him up.

"That is one term that is not to be negotiated, but Mr. Potter has told me that he is willing to drop the charges against the Ministry and the Daily Prophet for a flat fee of one million galleons from the Ministry of Magic," stated Bernard and Harry nodded. "And that his name and all references to his defeat of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is erased from magical record books..."

"Surely that can't be done," muttered a member of the court.

"Actually, there is precedent for the situation in your world," said one of the goblins harshly. "Salazar Slytherin held defeat a group of rogue goblins who planned to slaughter those in the goblin nation who had agreed with them and enslave all of humanity. A thought many of us have had granted, but it was too far. Slytherin played a big roll in their defeat but once he was determined to be a dark wizard, the Ministry had that removed from Magical history. We have documentation that is being presented to the court right now to prove this is not a false story."

The documentation was passed around for all of the members of the court to see. Fudge looked nervous and he was not the only one. Dumbledore looked like someone had cooked his phoenix and then fed it to him for dinner. Time passed, as Harry sat, in the shadows, with a smirk on his face. The same smirk that he offered when he humiliated Draco Malfoy once again, to the point where Malfoy was begging for mercy. It was not really worth Harry's time to recall but hopefully Malfoy had learned his lesson about minding his tongue, but Harry was not holding out any hope.



"As you can see, it is legitimate," said Bernard in a smug tone of voice, before he looked around. "There is legal precedent, and as I have dutifully noted, any claims that my client is this so called Boy-Who-Lived is hearsay perpetrated by the claims of Albus Dumbledore, who's character has been called into question more than once over recent years, ever since this alleged incident. Perhaps some of you better learned members of this court could detect the coloration. For some reason, it appears that Albus Dumbledore has an unhealthy obsession with grooming this boy, perhaps an experiment of some sort so he could see if he could create a living weapon..."

"I object to these claims, Mr. Bernard," stated Dumbledore calmly. "I have only did what I thought was in Harry's best interests..."

"My clients best interests and by extension, the best interests of the Wizarding World is simply for him to be left alone, to allow him to do as he pleases, without the demanding specter of this lies of fame hanging over his fame," stated Bernard. "I have stated my claims but this matter can be dragged out for months and more disturbing evidence can be brought to light, that could lead to further charges. I doubt you would want this to be carried out for much longer."

"Yes, I'm afraid we have no choice," said Amelia Bones. "Is there any other matters that Mr. Potter wishes to bring up?"

"No, Madam Bones, I have everything I want," responded Harry with a calm expression but he was really amused out how easily he could exploit the magical law system. In the Muggle World, such a trial would take months to set up before they ever saw the inside of the court room. The people that he was charging would have time to formulate some type of defense. However, as the head of two respected pureblood families, Harry had the ability to blindside them with this trial. He wanted this to happen and who was Harry to argue. It would be grand revenge from that farce of a trial last year.

"We have no choice, Potter has us in a corner," grumbled one of the members of the Wizengamot in a horrified tone of voice and Harry just looked rather bored, as if this was not even worth his time. "After all we've done for him..."

“Yes, slandering my name, really helpful,” muttered Harry, but he doubted many could hear him. Madam Bones cleared her throat, trying to maintain some semblance of decency, which was often a chore on a normal day, without it being a day like this.

“Very well, Mr. Potter and his legal council Mr. Bernard have laid out the terms and it would be hard to disprove them given what is common knowledge,” said Madam Bones with a sigh. “Mr. Potter will receive one hundred thousand Galleons from the families of the Death Eaters that assaulted him during an innocent visit of Azkaban prison and a flat fee of one million Galleons from the Ministry of Magic. All written records of the alleged defeat of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named are to be removed and Harry Potter is no longer to be referred to as the title of the Boy-Who-Lived. All of those in favor of having the Wizengamot carry out these requests.”

The vast majority of the Wizengamot raised their hands, rather shakily. Dumbledore looked grave and Harry looked smirked, as he pointed to his lighting bolt scar before he gave a slight wave of his hand.

“All opposed,” stated Bones and a few, along with Minister Fudge, raised their hands but they were struck down. “Motion passed.”

That announcement was so deflated and Harry smirked. The goblins were readying themselves to make the transfer right now, they would be making a killing off of the commission fee and if there was anything to goblins enjoyed, that was a killing.

“One more thing before I go, if you need any help against Voldemort or his followers don’t hesitate to....” Stated Harry before he paused and Dumbledore looked hopeful. “Kiss my arse, because I’m not going to be the one to fight your battles. If the Wizarding World can’t stand on its own two feet, then Voldemort can have it. I’m retiring to Hogwarts, I won’t be your savior any longer, and the few who stuck by me will be offered sanctuary, the others...well good luck and have a nice day.”

Without another word, Harry vanished causing the Wizengamot to descend into chaos. Dumbledore decided to make a hasty exit as well; because he was not feeling too comfortable with the looks those goblins were giving him.

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“So busy day?” asked Daphne as Harry arrived, after taking some time to get a few affairs in order, before Harry Potter disappeared from the public eye of the Wizarding World, outside of Hogwarts that is. The school offered him everything he wanted.

“If the Daily Prophet is to be believed and for once, I think it is for once, you just wiped out about seventy five percent of the pureblood families of this country and left at least another five or so percent pretty badly off,” commented Luna.

“How did you pull it off Harry?” asked Neville.

“The Ministry didn’t want to be tied up in a scandal with Voldemort on the loose, but I say they have even bigger problems on their mind,” stated Harry.

“Yes, I would say it might be a problem, considering there will be a severe economic crisis that may cause Magical Britain to collapse,” stated Daphne and Harry just shrugged.

“Doesn’t effect me or any of you, if you choose to take me up on my offer of sanctuary,” responded Harry before he closed his eyes. “If my guess is right, here comes Hermione to lecture me about something that is none of her business...”

“HARRY JAMES POTTER, I CAN’T BELIEVE WHAT YOU JUST DID!” shouted Hermione angrily.

“Can’t I call them?” muttered Harry under his breath and Hermione walked up. Ginny and Ron were hanging in the background. Ginny was trying hard not to look amused but Ron looked conflicted. “Yes, what is it Miss Granger? Yelling at a teacher is probable cause for a detention...”

"I can't believe you, I really can't this time, are you willing to destroy an entire country just for your selfish desires?" asked Hermione. "And what is this rubbish about you not being the Boy-Who-Lived? Of course everyone knows you're the Boy-Who-Lived..."

"Have you seen any proof, other than what someone written in a book?" asked Harry and Hermione just looked in a foul mood and she held her wand. "Please, put that away, Hermione, before we do something that we both regret."

"Technically it's true, there is no proof that Harry is the Boy-Who-Lived, there might not even be a Boy-Who-Lived, perhaps Voldemort had a malfunctioning wand," commented Luna lightly.

"Still Harry, I can't believe you would just give up, people are counting on you..." stated Hermione.

"To do what precisely," stated Harry coldly. "Pretend I don't see this world is full of self centered hypocrites who go along with the flow. Because, I'm spent Hermione, the fact I got completely beaten to a pulp by Voldemort proves that I shouldn't even bother. I might be the glorious hero today but what will I be tomorrow? An attention craving lunatic, the next Dark Lord, or who knows what. I'm done. I gave it my best shot and I fell flat on my face. I'm not going to ruin my life by fighting a battle that my heart's not into..."

"You don't have a heart," whispered Hermione. "Ever since this summer, you've forgotten who your friends really are..."

"Were you really my friend Hermione?" asked Harry coldly. "All you seemed to do was nag me about my choices and what I needed to do. You never thought I was smart enough to make my own decisions and now you can't stand that I've outgrown you..."

"I can't believe you would say that, Harry, I always thought of you as the brother I never had," said Hermione who was nearly in tears.

"If you were my sister, I would disown you," responded Harry calmly and Hermione turned, before she burst into tears and ran off. Ron

followed, looking rather uncomfortable. He warned Hermione now would not be the time to do this. Ginny just rolled her eyes and muttered "she deserved that" and walked off, as Harry turned.

"That was a bit cold, Harry," said Neville neutrally, understanding that Hermione had needled Harry enough to make him say that but at the same time, it was not what he would have said.

"She pushed him," said Daphne as she motioned over and whispered to Harry. "You did the right thing Harry, don't listen to that pompous little shrew, Granger. I would have told the Wizarding World where to go a long time ago."

"You're the master of your own destiny, Harry, no one else," said Luna mistily. "You have your reasons, maybe they will work out for the better. Maybe not, but it's your life."

"Mr. Potter, a word if you please," said the voice of Dumbledore.

"No, Dumbledore, I'm done, I said it and I mean it, you can fight Voldemort or better yet, track down Hermione, she seems to know everything, perhaps she can find a way to defeat Voldemort," said Harry through gritted teeth.

"I think you will regret these actions," stated Dumbledore.

"The only thing I regret is not doing it sooner," argued Harry.

"Countless will die, Harry," stated Dumbledore.

"That's the Ministry's problem," responded Harry calmly. "You should have never put your hopes with an underage wizard. Now you have a mess to clean up and I don't think you can do it."

"Voldemort will come for you Harry, he won't let this matter rest," argued Dumbledore.

"The Hogwarts protections are now in capable hands, it will take an act of God and a hundred wizards the level of Voldemort to break

through my protections,” stated Harry in a cool voice. “You’re dismissed Dumbledore, I’m going to enjoy my new life.”

Harry walked as Daphne followed him. Dumbledore bent his head, saddened.

“Harry you have failed us all,” stated Dumbledore, but he would not give up hope. There was still time to break through. It was always the darkest before the new day.

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The Death Eaters were gathered together for their daily meeting of evil and pure vile. Voldemort walked up, with a large mysterious object, draped in a black cloth. Voldemort turned, with a sadistic grin on his face, as he gave his Death Eaters the briefest of nods, acknowledging their presence.

“Good evening, children, Lord Voldemort is pleased of that you have managed to show up, even if he is not too pleased of your recent failures,” stated Voldemort calmly. “I understand the Ministry of Magic is in disarray and Lord Voldemort must commend you of finally doing something correctly. Of course, the law of averages would have to work in your favor eventually but such is life.”

Voldemort paused, as his followers looked at the mysterious object.

“Lord Voldemort is certain you are all wondering what’s underneath this cloth,” said Voldemort and there were a few nods. “Well, it is an apparatus that will allow me to help better amusement myself at your inevitable failures. Lord Voldemort has to mix things up, the torturing my followers to the near point of insanity is a bit played out...”

“Damn straight,” muttered Klea Shea under his breath.

“Especially considering many of you have already reached the point of no return,” stated Voldemort.

“Damn straight!” cheered Bellatrix proudly.

“So now Lord Voldemort has a new toy,” stated Voldemort and Bellatrix gave a squeal. “Not that kind of toy, Bella.”

The Death Eaters crowded around.

“I managed to locate this apparatus outside of a Muggle television studio, that had gone bankrupt recently, so Lord Voldemort decided to take it and modify it with the use of magic,” stated Voldemort and several Death Eaters exchanged uneasy looks when they realized that Voldemort’s new toy was a Muggle device. “Being the prodigal genius Lord Voldemort is, Lord Voldemort managed to get it working.”

Voldemort pulled out a sound system, powered by magic, with a dozens of buttons around it.

“Here’s how it works, Lord Voldemort is the greatest wizard that ever lived,” responded Voldemort and he pressed a button. The speakers erupted with the sounds of children cheering happily and joyously. “My Death Eaters failed a simple task yet again.”

Another press of the button and the cheering was replaced by loud booing and hissing. A smile appeared on Voldemort’s face.

“Lord Voldemort is most pleased with his work,” stated Voldemort. “Now onto the agenda of today’s meeting, Draco Malfoy has a few months to complete his task before Lord Voldemort’s patience wears out and Lord Voldemort is forced to sever our ties with Draco Malfoy. I trust your son knows that he has to accomplish this task, Lucius.”

“Yes, but my Lord, I’m not sure Draco realizes this is not a game,” said Lucius, who decided to leave out the fact that Potter humiliated his son yet again.

“He better soon, because Lord Voldemort would have to give this assignment in bad faith,” responded Voldemort before he pressed another button. Loud canned laughter echoed throughout the halls and Voldemort nodded. “Now, Lord Voldemort wishes to move further in his plans of destroying Harry Potter...”

"My Lord, I hate to be the barrier of bad news," stated a voice. "But Potter seems to have convinced the Wizengamot that he is not the Boy-Who-Lived..."

"Interesting," stated Voldemort calmly. "Tell me more, this news has not reached Lord Voldemort as of yet. There were matters of conquest that took greater precedence than keeping up on current events."

"Potter has sued all of the families of all of us who took part of that ill fated attack on him at the prison and received one hundred thousand Galleons from him," responded Lucius in a nervous voice. "Wiping many of us clean, not the Malfoys obviously, but...it's not good. We have barely enough money to sustain our lifestyle and we're have to merely settle for...living comfortably."

"Your story touches Lord Voldemort, Lucius," responded Voldemort sarcastically and he pressed a button, causing a loud "AWWW!" to be heard. "What is your current net worth, Lucius?"

"Seventy thousand Galleons, give or take some spare change," stated Lucius who looked ashamed that his net worth had been cut down to such an insultingly small amount. Voldemort calmly pressed a button and there was a sound of women laughing.

"Women laughing, that should be something very familiar to you, Lucius," responded Voldemort calmly and Lucius just stood there, taking it all as more laughter cued up. If he knew he would survive, Lucius would break that contraption that the Dark Lord had found, it was beginning to drive him insane.

"You seem very relaxed by losing the fortunes of many of your followers," remarked Dolohov, who was completely wiped out and his wife had to sell several properties. After all, he did not have Lucius Malfoy money.

"Why would Lord Voldemort need any gold?" asked Voldemort calmly. "Lord Voldemort is the Dark Lord, if Lord Voldemort would want something, Lord Voldemort would take it. Petty thievery is low on the list of crimes that Lord Voldemort has committed."



Voldemort turned to his followers.

“Lord Voldemort guesses there may be more,” stated Voldemort.

“Harry Potter has basically conceded defeat to you, my Lord,” said Lucius, hoping to improve the Dark Lord's mood and Voldemort turned, eyes on Lucius with an amount of curiosity etched in them. “Potter told the Wizarding World that they had to fight their own battles for a change. Rather Slytherin of him but that's beside the point. The point is Potter's given up on the war, so once Dumbledore is done, there will be no one who could oppose your power.”

Voldemort pressed a button and there was loud booing that echoed throughout the chamber, taking many of the Death Eaters to be taken aback.

“My Lord, shouldn't this be a joyous occasion?” asked Bellatrix.

“Yes, my Lord, you've won, Potter's given up,” stated Rookwood.

“I've won nothing!” snapped Voldemort angrily and the Death Eaters backed off. They knew this was serious, Voldemort had dropped referring to himself in the third person after all. “He just gave up...after all of this, after all of the time...Potter just thinks he can move on with his life. I was blasted from my body for thirteen years and I won't accept Potter's cowardly surrender! I must have my vengeance.”

Voldemort turned around, his eyes with anger. Several of the Death Eaters moved forward. Voldemort struck down a few token minority Death Eaters. The majority of the group tried to hide behind Klea Shae, because no one liked him.

“I won't be cheated out of my decisive victory, Potter!” shrieked Voldemort angrily, sounding like a jilted lover, as he conjured a chair and sat down, counting to one million under his breath in Parseltongue. The Death Eaters stood there, transfixed in terror, none of them daring to breath, as they watched their master appear to sink into a catatonic state. Voldemort rocked back and forth,

looking rather crazed and few took steps backwards, but suddenly, large metal spikes shot out of the floor, threatening to impale anyone who had moved any further.

“My Lord?” asked Bellatrix nervously.

“Potter is not allowed to give up, I refuse to accept it,” said Voldemort coldly. “I don’t care what I have to do. If I must, I’ll mutilate his friends, torture his girlfriend, rape his dog, I don’t care, but I will force Potter into battle. I will make him beg for his life and Lord Voldemort will make him humble.”

“Uh, my Lord,” stated Lucius.

“What now, Lucius?” asked Voldemort.

“Potter doesn’t have a dog,” responded Lucius calmly and Voldemort pressed a button. The sound of crickets chirping could be heard.

“Dismissed all of you, rape someone, kill someone, torture someone, rip tags off of mattresses, club baby seals, I don’t care, just do something, Lord Voldemort has some plans,” stated Voldemort calmly as he pressed a button, activating the loud cheers and the Death Eaters scrambled to leave. Voldemort was never in such a foul mood. Potter would pay for disrespecting him. It was almost like Potter thought that Lord Voldemort was not worth his time.

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Knockturn Alley was one of the seediest places in the entire magical world. It was a place that many refused to acknowledge. To say they just dealt with the trade of dark magical artifacts would be just scraping the service with the type of debauchery that those who had travelled down Knockturn Alley would. During the day, it was just merely a spooky place but the night held a more sinister story. There were fools who ventured down Knockturn Alley, in some misguided notion that it was actually rather safe and they were never found alive.

There was a pub that was deep within the black heart of Knockturn Alley called “The Crooked Wand”. It was a place that had every illegal

activity that could be imagined but the Ministry had never looked too much into it. Gold had exchanged hands and suspicions were easily forgotten. The bartender was a sinister looking man with several scars on his face and an eye patch. Even without a wand, he was not one to be trifled with and one would have to be tough to be the bartender of the Crooked Wand. There were duels daily, some rather bloody.

Every two bit magical hoodlum and dark wizard tended to at least step inside the pub one time or another unless they were soft like people like Lucius Malfoy, who merely played the role of a dark wizard out of being rich and bored.

"Alright," growled the bartender as he looked towards two unruly men, who were getting into a scuffle. "Break it up right now or..."

What the bartender would do was never decided, as a large blur blasted through the wall. The explosion of rubble caused several of the patrons to be knocked off balance and even the grizzled bartender to be taken off balance. They looked up at a figure, wearing jet black robes, with red symbols that were the Runes for "Anarchy" and "Chaos". The figure had a leather mask that resembled some demonic creature, stretched over his face, hiding his features and was sitting on top of a very expensive looking broomstick.

"Greetings, human filth," stated the figure gruffly.

"Look, I don't know who you are but this is a private club and unless you've been invited, you are to clear out," responded the bartender. "Unless you think you're tough enough to fight me."

"A simple challenge," responded the figure, with a nod, as he lifted up hands that were covered in silvery gloves.

"Of course with that outfit, guy doesn't look so tough, he's got to be a pretender," stated one of the patrons in a drunken manner. "Who made you that outfit anyway, boy?"

"Your mother," responded the figure before he cackled. The patron attempted to get up but a flaming metal spike was conjured and

blasted right into the chest of the drunken patron. He dropped down to the floor, blood gushing out of his chest like a geyser. "A mere parlor trick, you don't want to experience my true power."

"Just who are you anyway?" asked the bartender, who was slightly panicked, by a person who could shoot flaming spikes seemingly out of nowhere. He was a hardened wizard, having seen a lot but this unnerved him slightly. "Some kind of demon or something?"

"You wish," stated the figure. "The name is Downfall. That's D for Decimate, O for Obliterate, W for Wallop, N for No Survivors, F for Flatten, A for Annihilate, L for Lacerate, and L for Lobotomize. Don't you dare forget it..."

"Let's get this costume wearing freak!" shouted one of the patrons but Downfall just dodged their pitiful attempts to grab him. Several blasts of light struck their chests. They were hoisted up the ground, as they shrieked in pain. They dropped to the ground, blood splattering from their mouth. "The sound that you just heard was their vital organs being ripped apart..."

Several more of the patrons had attempted to attack Downfall but they had little luck. The sound of several necks snapping and more bodies dropped to the ground.

"Really, that's rude, I'm a guest in your club," stated Downfall as he looked down at the bartender, who stepped back, as a few more bodies were still alive. Downfall bounced down and several miniature orbs of white light shot. They screamed as it struck their chests. Their organs were being burned down to nothing and the bartender was disarmed, as Downfall slammed him against the wall, without even laying one finger on him. "So, how are you doing?"

"How am I doing?" asked the bartender in a small voice, the once tough bad ass having been figuratively neutered.

"I'll can the small talk, as it would just be awkward for both of us," stated Downfall. "First of all, Francis Dolohov...any relation to the Death Eater?"

“Yes, distant cousin, never talk him, don’t really bother with him...” stated the bartender who wondered how this Downfall thing knew who he was.

“I read your mind you twit,” stated Downfall coldly as he magically snapped the bartender’s neck and he slumped to the floor dead. “You talk to his kind on a daily basis. Not only do you trade dark artifacts, but you also arrange for wanted fugitives to go into hiding. You also use your little club as a place to sell kidnapped underage Muggle girls into prostitution. You also traffic Muggle drugs as well and restricted potions that serve as similar functions to many of those said drugs, for the blood purists. I could go on but I’ll make matters short. All of Knockturn Alley is one of the byproducts of the disease that has infected the Wizarding World. Therefore it must be destroyed.”

Downfall just turned and looked around.

“And I’m rambling about my plans to a bunch of corpses,” stated Downfall seriously before he cackled and climbed back on his broomstick, dropping several white shaped orbs on the ground. The orbs illuminated to brightness, before it shot white fire everywhere, beginning to burn the Crooked Wand to the ground. If he had missed killing someone, they were surely dead now. Downfall rose up from the pub, so high that he could see all of Knockturn Alley. “So what the Ministry never had the guts to do.”

Downfall gave Knockturn Alley a very sarcastic wave from above, before a wave of the hand caused several glowing orbs to be seen from above. The white fire erupted from them and began to burn Knockturn Alley to the ground. Downfall removed a bag of popcorn from his robes and tapped his wand, causing it to pop. He watched Knockturn Alley burn from below, eating popcorn, with an amused expression, staying for about fifteen minutes, before he moved down.

The Ministry would have a hell of a mess in the morning and Downfall cackled madly as he disappeared through the night.

Finally, done with Chapter Fourteen, as Downfall is back in business but this is only the beginning.

I'm sure I broke some law of realism but far be it for me to care. I was entertained.

Next chapter, a bit of wackiness, a bit of romance, a bit of blood, a bit of whatever I feel like putting in there.

## Chapter Fifteen: Insanity is Bliss:

The most difficult part of Auror duty was transporting captured prisoners from the Ministry holding cells after their trial to Azkaban. Most of the individuals captured were Death Eaters and thus sent to Azkaban without a second thought. Others, it was slightly more complicated.

"Alright, everyone move it," stated a hardened, battle scarred Auror, as about dozen or so figures, new recruits by the looks of it, were escorted to Azkaban. "Scrimgeour wants this lot in Azkaban within the next hour."

"Azkaban, a nice vacation spot for bad little Death Eaters, but I think I have a more permanent rest home for them!" cackled an insane voice as a blur shot down, green flames blasting from the hands of the figure. The fire impacted two of the fugitives immediately and one of them was hoisted up, before slammed down against the wall. There was little time to register what happened, as the Aurors got a fix on the person above, as he sent a flaming metal spike down, seemingly from mid air. It struck one of the prisoners in the top of the head, splitting right through his skull before it ended up right through his jaw.

"Freeze, you're under..." stated one of the Aurors but he never finished his statement, as with one flick of the figure's wrist, needles impaled each of the Aurors in the right shoulder. All of them slumped down, temporarily paralyzed, as one of the prisoners attempted to get away. A blunt force trauma to the back of the neck stopped that and two more were lifted by the air, held up by the shackles that were trapped in. The figure hoisted them high into the air, where those still below could not have even seen anything. The shackles unhooked and the captives dropped to the ground. A loud crack and blood splattered off the ground.

The figure swooped down; shooting what appeared to be white hot balls of fire, striking the remaining prisoners. Their skin began to melt at an alarming rate, the sickening smell of burned flesh was noticeable from miles around.

"A shame this does not last a bit longer," said the figure as he turned, allowing the paralyzed Aurors to get a good look at his demonic features. It looked like a mask but more than a couple of the Aurors were not sure, given the way he moved and was throwing fire beyond what was magically plausible. "Here's a warning, to all of the Aurors, feel free to spread the word. I went easy on you today, because I understand the rules of the game are not clear yet. Still, spread that word, anyone who gets in my way of my noble crusade will be annihilated! Tell them all that anyone who steps in my way will be obliterated. By the time it's all said and done no one will ever forget the name of Downfall!"

Downfall flew away, cackling, as each and every prisoner was down on the ground. It was a one hundred percent success rate, everyone that he wanted dead, was in fact dead. It would be about another twenty or so minutes before the Aurors could report what happened but most of them were horrified by the fact that if this Downfall wanted to, he could have killed them easily.

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Weekly staff meeting was always an intriguing experience at Hogwarts. Harry found he was able to attend this one, it was amazing how much free time one had on his hands. Snape arrived, in his usual foul tempered mood but he stopped, looking at Harry, a sneer curling on his face.

"Well if it isn't the great and powerful Harry Potter," stated Snape. "Decided to finally attend staff meetings with the rest of us lowly teachers..."

"Good morning, Severus, pleased to see you as well, tell me, did you know that the Slytherins are so deep in the negatives, they won't dig themselves out for about the next fifty years?" asked Harry calmly. "Thanks to your attitude, I might add. Of course, the house system will be the next thing to go but I'm still working out the finer details of that..."



“Now, Professor Potter,” stated McGonagall as she had sat down. “The Hogwarts house system is a tradition that has been around since the time of the founders...”

“Respectfully speaking Professor, it was once a tradition for women to be unable to vote and also not to hold any jobs outside of the home, but we knew that was something that was outdated,” responded Harry. “Sometimes, outdated traditions have to be purged. Of course, I was not putting this matter to a vote and it might be a few years before it happens anyway.”

Dumbledore arrived and he sat down at the head of the table. Harry allowed him this small privilege, let Dumbledore think he had power.

“I wish to bring up the matter of expelling nineteen Slytherin, from fifth to seventh year,” said Dumbledore as he looked at Harry. “Was it really necessary for you to take such a drastic step, Harry?”

“I’ve given them enough warning, figure Headmaster,” responded Harry in a polite voice. “They continue to disregard my rulings, despite numerous detentions and mass humiliation. I must admit, I’m proud of Draco Malfoy’s restraint at showing his disdain to Muggleborn students as of late, but I fear that he may have an ulterior motive in mind but for this very second, I’m willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

Snape and Dumbledore exchanged a brief uneasy look before they turned back to the meeting. They knew what Malfoy was up to but they had mutually to let the plan play out. Both of them wondered if Harry had guessed that plan but both decided to dismiss it for different reasons.

“I’ve also had to expel six Hufflepuffs, eleven Ravenclaws, and a disappointing ten Gryffindors for using such terms as well, so don’t think that the problem is exclusive to Slytherin,” said Harry and the other three heads of houses looked shamed at this news. “I’m willing to let fourth year and below students off with warnings and detentions, along with points taken, provided it does not get too far out of hand. If it does...well I’ll figure out some criteria to deal with the situation. If anything, I’m a fair and impartial individual.”

It looked like it took every sense of restraint Snape had not to say something and Dumbledore gave Snape a look of warning. The Potions Professor looked at the table.

“Very well, all of the classes are moving on as planned, if I’m not mistaken,” stated Dumbledore. “I must say that despite your rather...unique teaching methods, this years Defense Against the Dark Arts scores are up slightly, in sixth and seventh years, but also up immensely in the first through fifth year classes. So, I offer my congratulations Harry...it is a shame that you could not apply those abilities in the upcoming battle.”

Harry just refused to answer, he sat there, as Dumbledore went over each of the departments. Snape made his usual complaints about the sanctions that Harry was imposing on his abilities to teach Potions his way, but Dumbledore refused to hear anything of it. Fighting Harry on this matter was something that Dumbledore did not perceive to be important, especially since there was far more pressing battles that Dumbledore felt he needed to fight involving Harry. Not that he would win them but if nothing else, it just showed Dumbledore was not willing to give up.

It would be his downfall in the end but that was another story entirely.

“Hogsmeade visit is coming up in another couple of weeks and I have to say I’m concerned that we might be running into some issues, Voldemort may decide to attack the village on that day,” responded Dumbledore and the other teachers nodded, as Harry just looked rather bored. “Is there something you wish to add, Harry?”

“No, not really, I would say do the trip and perhaps add to the security, it’s not like the Order has anything better to do, with putting Death Eaters back into Azkaban, instead of sending them to a more permanent fate,” responded Harry lightly. “But then again, I’m long since the past of the point of carrying. I personally will not be attending this trip. I have no desire to be sucked back into this war when I got out.”

“Yes, Harry, you’ve made to stance quite clear,” said Dumbledore in a disapproving voice. “Still, your suggestion on added security is most appreciated, perhaps you would like to...”

“No,” stated Harry sharply.

“You didn’t allow me to finish Harry,” protested Dumbledore.

“No, Dumbledore, just no,” repeated Harry. “I know what it’s going to be and I refuse to be tricked into leading a war I scarcely give a damn about. I tried fighting Voldemort. I lost, no shame in that. Perhaps someone else will come along that will put the bastard in the cold hard ground where he belongs.”

“People are dying Harry,” stated Dumbledore as most of the members of the staff looked rather uncomfortable.

“Have more died since it was proven by a court of magical law that I was not the Boy-Who-Lived?” asked Harry, deciding to emphasize this statement concisely and clearly.

“No, statistically speaking, the deaths are about the same, it’s difficult to account either way, during such a period of time,” admitted Dumbledore and Harry just responded with a slightly raised eyebrow, a look of triumph on his face. “But Harry, you must understand, it’s still my destiny...”

“Says who?” asked Harry and Dumbledore frowned. To answer that question, he would have to admit the existence of the prophecy to his staff, a few of them he had not really known personally, only through his interactions with them involving school matters. “Besides, figure Headmaster, you’re Albus Dumbledore, greatest wizard who ever lived or so says most of Gryffindor. Surely, you don’t need an underage wizard to fight your battles against Voldemort for you. I mean, surely the great and powerful Albus Dumbledore can do anything. One slightly crazed, really powerful dark wizard should be no problem for Albus Dumbledore, the greatest wizard who ever lived. You don’t need me Dumbledore. Come on, valiant leader of the light, step up and defeat Voldemort, unless you’re not worth the parchment your many accolades are printed on.”

Harry sat there with his arms folded.

“Come on, you can do it,” stated Harry with a big cheesy smile. “Go get ‘em, champ! Give me a D, give me a U, give me a M, give me a B, give me an L, give me a E, give me a D, give me O, give me a R, give me an E. What does that spell? Dumbledore!”

“Harry,” stated Dumbledore in a disapproving voice.

“Go, Dumbledore, rah rah, yay team!” cheered Harry in an overly dramatic and over the top manner, looking like an overblown cartoon character the way he was throw

“I believe you have made your point, Professor Potter,” said McGonagall in an even voice, who was in no mood to be in another battle wills between Harry and Dumbledore.

“Yes, Potter, do try and remember this is a staff meeting, not another outlet for your rubbish,” stated Snape with a sneer.

“Five millions points from Slytherin,” said Harry calmly.

“What for this time Potter?” asked Snape.

“Because,” answered Harry curtly. “Back to the matter at hand, I believe the figure Headmaster was talking about some security measures around Hogsmeade that I most certainly won’t be a part of.”

Dumbledore nodded as he decided to ignore the problem involving Harry for a second. As the Headmaster, even if it as a figurehead, he still had a certain amount of responsibility. To his credit, Harry did chime in, making suggestions but continued to make it clear that he wanted no part of actually working security detail in Hogsmeade.

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“Morning Daphne,” said Harry at breakfast one more a couple of days later but Daphne stood there, giving Harry a quick kiss in greeting as

they walked towards the Gryffindor table hand in hand. She seemed a bit preoccupied about something and a bit irritated as well. "I didn't do anything, did I?"

"No Harry, believe me, I'd let you know if you did something," responded Daphne as she frowned as a trio of first years were talking in terror. "You're late, so you've missed the mass hysteria. The lower year students are freaking out about a demon or some such rubbish, coming to get them."

"A demon, you say?" inquired Harry with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes, Potter, a demon, fairy tale rubbish even by the standards of the Wizarding World," stated Daphne and Harry looked at her, she regretted being a bit sharp with him immediately. "I do apologize if I sound a bit short, but demons are just something that even I find a bit far fetched. I bet all the gold in Gringotts that it's something that the Daily Prophet blew completely out of proportion..."

"It is a demon, Daphne," said Astoria in a serious voice, but she did not look that fearful, only curious.

"Oh for Salazar's sake, not you too," responded Daphne as she rolled her eyes as she walked over, grabbing a copy of the Daily Prophet. "Creature attacks Knockturn Alley, burns it to the ground, no survivors, suspected Death Eaters attacked and slain on route to Azkaban, Aurors temporarily paralyzed by inhumane individual, three times this happened, warnings that the next time the Aurors stepped in its way, they would be destroyed...Downfall, what in the hell is this rubbish?"

"There's a picture of it," stated Neville, who had joined the conversation, with Luna slightly behind. Even Ginny was nearby, listening in under the pretext of staring at Harry and Daphne with a murderous glare. "Looks an awful lot like a demon to me..."

"Looks like some nutcase in a Halloween costume who has a vendetta against Death Eaters to me," answered Harry lightly, as if he was merely discussing the weather forecast.

"See, Harry has the sense not to buy into this demon rubbish," said Daphne, as she looked at Harry with an approving nod, as they sat down at the Gryffindor table.

"Well how else would you explain something like this...Downfall?" asked Luna, who was giving Harry odd looks curiously, but shook her head and decided to fix herself a plate to eat. "A wizard with elemental powers, fire perhaps..."

"Another fairy tale, mastery over the elements, I suppose you think that this demon is soul bound to something," responded Daphne sarcastically rolling her eyes.

"Don't be ridiculous Daphne, this demon doesn't have a soul bond," responded Astoria. "It's common knowledge that demons don't really have souls...."

"It's not a demon," answered Daphne disgusted that she was having this conversation to begin it. "As Harry said, it's some person in a Halloween costume, who has a vendetta against Death Eaters. That really narrows the list of suspects down."

"Yes, it could be any of us then," answered Luna lightly.

"But I doubt a human could take out eight Aurors in one shot, not even Harry could do that and we know how good he is," responded Neville and Harry nodded slowly.

"Although given the quality of the Ministry employees, one could wonder," offered Daphne, as if that explained anything. "Look at the Minister...still in office by the absolute skin of his teeth but his days are numbered, if it wasn't for the Ministry being tied up with other matters, he would have been gone by now."

"Well it's a difficult road when your false idols decide to throw in the towel," commented Harry as he looked at Draco Malfoy, who was in a foul mood, and snapping at some first year Slytherins, for merely brushing against his robes.

"Guess he learned about Knockturn Alley being burned down," said Astoria calmly. "It's pretty much confirmed that Lucius has a lot of his gold tied up in businesses in Knockturn Alley."

"You know, for some reason, I'm hardly surprised," stated Harry. "How much gold?"

"Not enough to wipe him out, unfortunately," supplied Neville as they looked around. Hermione was giving Harry dark looks, as if this was somehow his fault. Harry could not be bothered to listen to the Dumbledore inspired rhetoric of a traitorous witch like her so he finished his Breakfast.

"See you tonight, Daphne, I have a busy day ahead of me," said Harry, as they had an extended and slightly passionate good bye, but nothing too over the top. They saved the real stuff for when they were behind closed doors and out of the public eye.

"Yes, I suspect so, and I'll catch up with you later," remarked Daphne as they parted ways. Their relationship was moving along the proper path, slowly, but steadily, it would be a few years before they would have worry about much more than a casual relationship at best. They were close, but it was not like they were making long term plans to be married. Anyone who made plans at such a young age were fools and destined for future divorce.

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"Everyone is present and accounted for," said Dumbledore in a bright voice, twinkle in his eye, as he looked around, a few members of the Order looked slightly petrified and others looked around from side to side. Others yet were disbelieving. "I trust everyone has heard the latest in the Daily Prophet as of this morning..."

"Yes, Albus, the demon, we've heard that," said Moody in a neutral voice. While he was not completely brushing off the theory of demons existing, he was certain that it was possible that the Daily Prophet was blowing things out of proportion.

"As if He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named wasn't enough, we have to deal with a demon," responded Molly Weasley in a fearful voice.

"Not to mention, Potter deciding to turn coward at the worst possible time," muttered one of the members of the Order but that got him a few disapproving glares. Dumbledore just cleared his throat.

"Harry is a matter that we can tackle at another time, but I'm concerned about this situation, Downfall, as the Daily Prophet said this individual is calling itself," said Dumbledore. "A demon or even a rather powerful dark wizard, is the last thing we need with Tom at the height of his insanity and perhaps at the most dangerous."

"Yes, the Dark Lord has killed followers in cold blood recently, due to the fact that they have failed him once too often for his liking," remarked Snape. "I'm managing to slowly work my way back into the Dark Lord's confidence but it is a long process that will take time."

"Snape, we don't have time for you to convince Voldemort that you're a murderous bastard," responded Moody gruffly. "Whatever this Downfall is, we have to stop it..."

"But how can we stop a demon?" asked Tonks. She had fought some dangerous battles during her short time as an Auror, but they were against human beings. Powerful dark wizards to be granted, but not a supernatural force that appeared to manipulate fire and be impervious to pain, that was an entire new mess that she was unwilling to even think that she had the ability to tackle. Especially considering what she heard her fellow Aurors say, how he temporarily paralyzed them with one fell swoop.

"Oh, please, none of you have figured out what's really going on," said Snape suddenly, with a smirk on his face as if he had come to some brilliant conclusion. "Downfall can only be one person, I'm surprised none of you have figured out, but I suspect I best spell it out for some of our more...simple minds within the Order."

"Do present your theory, Severus," encouraged Dumbledore but he wondered if he would regret giving Snape the opportunity to press



forward on this theory and he was not the only one to give Snape a look of uneasy.

“Well, Potter seemed to just up and quit a bit more quickly than someone of his arrogant nature would have, I do give him credit for this shrewd ruse but I for one am not about to fall for such a paper thin plot,” said Snape as he sat up straight. “You see Potter wouldn’t just let the matter die, he’d have to be avenged somehow, it’s not in his ego to give up. To make a long story simply short, Downfall and Potter are one in the same.”

That revelation by Snape was met by complete silence and then seconds later, loud laughter. Many of the members of the Order looked rather amused by Snape’s belief that Harry Potter would be this Downfall individual.

“Harry as Downfall, that’s a good one,” said Bill Weasley in between laughter. “Are we talking about the same person, the same Harry Potter?”

“Yes, Harry Potter, scrawny sixteen year old with glasses and bad hair, who had been thrust into a battle with Voldemort, without being able to choose,” responded Tonks. “Downfall, a dangerous creature who’s likely to be a demon, able to manipulate fire and take out single Aurors in a single bound, without even breaking a sweat...”

“Potter did knock out those Dementors with that Patronus Spell,” reminded Snape. “And held his own well enough...”

“Snape, someone holding his own and actually being as dangerous this Downfall are two entirely different matters, besides the Patronus spell has always been something that Potter has always excelled at,” said Moody gruffly. “You’re being paranoid, seeing Harry Potter everywhere, wanting to blame him for everything.”

“It’s Potter, he’s playing some kind of elaborate game with all of us, because of his supreme arrogance,” said Snape in a stubborn voice with a sneer. “His ability to perform wandless magic...”

“Doesn’t add up,” commented Dumbledore lightly. “Severus, I appreciate your input as always, but given Harry’s recent attitude and mindset as of late, he would fully drop blatant hints that he is Downfall. He’s never been shy as of late of expressing the fact he has power....”

“Yes, I do realize that, Dumbledore,” interrupted Snape in a forced voice. “But the fact that Potter is Downfall...”

“Is all in your head Snape, you just want it to be the boy, because it’s the easiest way of dealing with the problem,” remarked Moody gruffly. “I’m not going to go as far as some people, by saying that this Downfall is a demon. It could be a really powerful wizard, perhaps someone from a foreign country or someone who we believed to be long gone. It could be anyone...”

“Of it could be a demon as many believe,” said Kingsley slowly. “I’m not sure...”

“The Aurors that came in the other day during your day off, they were petrified to death, and that’s people that have seen it all,” interrupted Tonks. “I don’t know about the rest of you, but when I signed up to be an Auror and a member of the Order, I signed up to fight dark wizards, not bloody demons...”

“It’s Potter,” muttered Snape through gritted teeth but everyone ignored him. They were used to blocking out Snape’s allegations regarding Harry Potter right now.

“Downfall may be one of the most frustrating enemies that we had to tackle, but let’s not forget that Lord Voldemort and his followers are the main purpose of the Order of the Phoenix, containing them and bringing them to justice,” stated Dumbledore.

“Justice, you foolish insects, you call what you do, justice!” said a menacing voice, seemingly coming from within the walls, which caused more than one of the members of the Order to join. Moody in particular had instinctively blasted the door open and started firing about six curses before he thought what he was doing. “Putting Death

Eaters back in a place where they have proven that they can break out time and time again.

“Who is this?” demanded Molly Weasley but she was only answered by loud cackles.

“It’s the demon,” responded the voice coldly and several members of the Order grew pale. “I’ve decided since the Ministry of Magic and your little bird watching club can’t give this scum the treatment they deserve, someone has to do it. I’ve sat idle for too long. Dumbledore, you should have never tried to force me into that cage.”

Dumbledore looked confused. He had no idea what Downfall was talking about and he had no recollection of ever hearing about Downfall prior today.

“You see the rules of the game have changed, as in there are no rules,” stated Downfall in a menacing tone of voice. “Sheer anarchy...utter and complete destruction...I’ll ensure that saving the Wizarding World will no longer be your concern...there will be nothing left to save once I’m done. I will cure the cancer by destroying the host! The greatest thing about is that I can toy with you as long as I want, but once I get board, I can pull the plug at any time.”

“You can’t just kill people,” said Dumbledore but Downfall responded with a loud insane round of laughter.

“I don’t know if you’re stupid or just senile, Bumblebee Man,” answered Downfall before he laughed at his own really bad joke. “I can do whatever I want. I have power beyond the imagining of mere mortals. Anyone I want dead will be dead. In the meantime, the world is just a playground for me...”

“You can be stopped,” said Dumbledore but he was grasping at straws. “The Order of the Phoenix will not rest until you’re brought to justice...”

“The last time I dropped my guard for a moment, you locked me away, I won’t make the same mistake twice!” cried Downfall in a joyous voice. “See, the Order of the Phoenix has two choices. Number one,

they can stand back and let me annihilate every single one of Riddle's followers, until it's one on one, Voldemort against Downfall. That dime store Dark Lord doesn't have a chance against me and the fact that he's gotten so powerful is a sad indictment on the Wizarding World at large. Or the other choice...I will not hesitate to kill anyone sitting in this room. It's bad enough that the Wizarding World has spawned scum like Voldemort. The fact that people like you, Dumbledore, who try and talk about justice and giving people second chances, giving them the benefit of the doubt, think you're the only one who knows best. Your methods have been proven to be nothing but failures. Mine work well."

"Drop the act, Potter," said Snape.

"This scumbag actually thinks I'm Harry Potter?" asked Downfall and Dumbledore nodded calmly, and the only response Downfall gave was several minutes of loud laughter. Moody frowned as he tried to get a fix on where Downfall was magically projecting his voice. "Oh don't try and tracking the source of this transmission, because it's being done from a shack that will blow into dust the second I Portkey out. And that's right now."

Without another word, Downfall could not be heard and Moody looked frustrated, his tracking spell malfunctioned.

"We have a problem, Dumbledore," concluded Moody.

"You may have made an understatement of the century, Alastor," said Dumbledore as he tried to get onto the rest of the Order of the Phoenix meeting but he was preoccupied by the unexpected appearance of Downfall.

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Cornelius Fudge was packing the things in his office away in a hurried manner, looking over his shoulder. He had been an absolute wreck since Potter had decided he was too good to do his duty to the Ministry of Magic anymore. Now he had enemies attacking him from all sides and now this new problem, a bloody demon of all things. Demons were myths, very rarely able to go into this realm but this

Downfall, the Ministry of Magic agreed a demon would be the only explanation for what this Downfall was. Still, Fudge felt that he was going to be forced to retire in a matter of days anyway, so he might as well beat his enemies to the punch and resign from his duties as Ministry of Magic first thing tomorrow morning.

Still, he was the Minister of Magic tonight, and tonight was his birthday, so he would celebrate it in style. He would go out on his last night as Minister with a bang, all at the expense of the tax payers of Wizarding Britain naturally. He had some adult entertainment arranged. Naturally he made sure his wife was preoccupied with other matters, so she did not find out about his activities.

It would be a great night to be the Minister of Magic. What could possibly go wrong?"

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Daphne and Harry were walking through the hallways.

"What do you think about this entire mess involving Downfall, Harry?" asked Daphne suddenly.

"I think it's none of my concern," remarked Harry in a cool, indifferent tone of voice. "Far as I'm concerned, it looks like another crazed madman, perhaps with parental abandonment issues, but if he's killing Death Eaters than I wish him the best of luck. Anyone who might have a chance against Voldemort, that's great but I think it's been proven that it's not me. I mean, who would ever thing that a scrawny sixteen year old with bad hair and glasses could defeat the greatest dark wizard that ever lived?"

"Yes, that does sound a bit far fetched, even for the Wizarding World," agreed Daphne with a slow nod, as she leaned up against Harry. "What if he starts attacking innocents?"

"Whatever floats his boat, as long as Downfall doesn't step one foot into Hogwarts," responded Harry and Daphne nodded. "Then, I smack him around a bit, I don't care if he's a demon or a really deranged midget or a shape shifting alien from another dimension or

what. Step into my Hogwarts, and he'll know the meaning of true fear. This is my castle and when you step into a king's castle and try to cause trouble, the next stop is the guillotine."

"Okay, your majesty," responded Daphne with a mocking bow but she was smiling and she leaned over, wrapping her arms around Harry's neck and Harry leaned in, as their lips met in a passionate kiss. All thoughts about Downfall or rather anything were shoved way in the back. Somehow, but sheer force of will, they found their way into the Room of Requirement.

They had a couple of hours to kill, especially since before Harry had some pressing business to take care of.

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"Have a good time?" echoed a voice in Harry's head, as he returned to his office and Harry put his hands on his head. He had just walked Daphne back to the Slytherin Common Room. Now that the vast majority of the problem cases were gone, it was a much more peaceful house. Besides, there was many more chances to keep an eye on Malfoy, because Harry benched his two cronies. Harry guessed Malfoy was to kill someone important and by all indications, it seemed to be Dumbledore. That was a mission that Harry thought Malfoy was destined to fail. "You can ignore me all you want with your inner flashback monologue Potter, but the fact is that I'm still here, pal."

"Just a figment of my own imagination," responded Harry to himself under his breath as he turned around, putting some graded essays away.

"Right, of course I am, a figment of your own imagination somehow gained a physical form and torched Knockturn Alley to the ground," echoed the voice.

"What are you trying to prove?" asked Harry. "There are very few things in the Wizarding World worth fighting for..."

"I agree, Harry," responded the voice. "I truly do agree, that's why as I told the Bumblebee Man I plan to destroy everything, starting with Riddle and his followers...."

"The Bumblebee Man?" asked Harry.

"Dumbledore, you know because Albus Dumbledore means White Bumblebee," explained the voice calmly.

"Right," commented Harry. "I don't even know why I'm responding to you. You're obviously the result of me getting hit with one Cruciatus Curse too many."

"Keep telling yourself that," stated the voice. "Tell me, did Dumbledore look a bit off tonight at dinner? Like he heard a demon or something. Remember when you dozed off for about an hour after your fourth year Defense class?"

"I'm so not listening to you," said Harry under his breath.

"Sweet dreams Harry, when you wake up in the morning, check the Daily Prophet, because Minister Fudge is about to get a birthday surprise," echoed the voice but Harry just ignored it. Voices in his head that was not a good sign, not at all. There was nothing wrong, these were all just coincidences, nothing to worry about.

Harry went to bed, as if there was nothing out of the ordinary. He had to teach his fellow sixth years tomorrow and that was always a headache waiting to happen.

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"Lord Voldemort is not happy," said Voldemort softly at his latest meeting of Death Eaters. "And do you know why Lord Voldemort is not happy?"

The Death Eaters all had there theories but it appeared the Dark Lord was in one of his moods and none of them were willing to raise his ire by saying anything.

"It's bad enough that each and every one of you are thirty two different flavors of epic failure," said Voldemort and a press of the button, caused laughter to be heard. "The fact remains that just recently, Lord Voldemort lead a series of attacks on three Muggle orphanages. Foul places by they way, but that's another matter for another day. Three orphanages were burned to the ground and dozens of orphans murdered in horrific, disturbing, yet creative ways. It's the easiest way in the world to spread the fear of our cause. Yet, what does Lord Voldemort get? Regulated to page three of the Daily Prophet, because some nutcase burned down Knockturn Alley!"

Boos from the sound system could be heard and Voldemort had a look of rage on his face.

"I have named my pain and it's named Downfall," hissed Voldemort.

"There's something that's original," remarked Klea Shae sarcastically with a roll of his eyes.

"Silence, no one was talking to you!" shouted Voldemort angrily. "This Downfall decided upstage Lord Voldemort, by not only burning Knockturn Alley to the ground, but also killing some of my new recruits, who were foolish enough to get themselves caught. Lord Voldemort is not pleased by this development, no Lord Voldemort is not too happy and I won't take that this lying down. There are people more scared of this Downfall, then there is of the greatest dark wizard who ever lived."

"Absurd," muttered a few voices, lead by Bellatrix.

"But, my Lord, surely you don't expect us to deal with a demon," stated the fearful voice of Dolohov.

"Lord Voldemort is more terrifying then any demon," stated Voldemort. "Lord Voldemort has the power to control demons but this Downfall is not a demon..."

"I'm not so sure, my Lord," interjected Rookwood and Voldemort's eyes snapped towards him, disgusted that Rookwood had the gall to interrupt him. "I know someone who knows someone who knows



someone who has a cousin who knows someone who used to date someone who knows someone who is a neighbor to someone who knows someone who overheard the Aurors talking about this Downfall. He has powers to manipulate fire. He can blast it from his hands, he can spit it from his mouth, he can blast it from his eyes. He also moves faster than any magical spell in existence and he can levitate entire buildings the size of the Ministry into the air with the greatest of ease.”

“And Lord Voldemort is sure that Downfall is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound,” said Voldemort sarcastically as several of the Death Eaters began muttering, trading tales of what they have heard about Downfall. “I’m sure many of you are under this delusion that there may be a possible that Downfall is more powerful than Lord Voldemort.”

A press of the button signaled boos.

“No mere mortal could defeat you, my Lord,” said Bellatrix in a gleeful voice, hoping that her master would give the world, so she could personally teach Downfall a lesson about interfering in the affairs of her master.

“There is nothing mere about this Downfall, he’ll kill us all, that thing’s a bloody demon, none of us have a hope!” stated Goyle with widened eyes and Voldemort turned with a disturbingly creepy look on his face as he looked at Goyle. “Except for you of course my Lord, I mean, it’s not like anyone can defeat you.”

“Thank you for the vote of confidence, Goyle,” stated Voldemort shortly. “Downfall is matter that must be eradicated, if Lord Voldemort’s plans for conquest of the Wizarding World and my attempts to bring Potter out into the open for one final epic confrontation are to go unchallenged. So, we will put our usual murder, rape, and baby seal clubbing on the shelf, Lord Voldemort wants all of your energies focused in killing Downfall. Lucius will pay five thousand galleons...”

“Wait a minute!” interrupted Lucius but Voldemort pressed a button. A loud “GONG” was heard.

“As I was saying, the person who brings Lord Voldemort the head of Downfall, will be rewarded five thousand Galleons straight from the Malfoy family account,” said Voldemort in a voice that left no room for argument. “Lord Voldemort is not picky whether or not said head is still attached to the body once it is brought to him.”

There were several nods.

“Time is wasting, vengeance must be taken on Downfall for attempting to upstage Lord Voldemort’s attempt to strike terror into the hearts and minds of the Wizarding World,” concluded Voldemort.

“Don’t forget murdering some of your followers, my Lord,” chimed in Bellatrix.

“Yes, that as well,” said Voldemort dismissively, as he waved his hand. “All of you are dismissed; I want Downfall finished once and for all. Lord Voldemort will not be denied.”

With that, the Death Eaters went out. Voldemort turned towards no one in particular.

“They will all fail,” commented Voldemort. “They always do. At the very least Downfall will remove some of my more inept followers from existence and then Lord Voldemort will have the opportunity to find a weakness in whoever or whatever Downfall is.”

Voldemort gave a high, cold round of laughter, despite the fact there was no one around to hear it.

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Fudge sat in a private room, paid for compliments of the taxpayers of Wizarding Britain. Two robed figures wheeled in a cake, also paid for compliments of the taxpayers of Wizarding Britain. His last night as Minister of Magic would be one that he would not be remembering in the morning, based on the heavy amounts of alcohol he had

consumed. The world was a blissful place where he did not have to worry about any Dark Lords or crazed demons or rogue saviors or manipulative old men or any of the everyday problems.

"This card came for you, Mr. Fudge," stated one of the men and Fudge took the card, just barely able to read it.

"Happy birthday Minister, I hope your celebration tonight, ends with a bang," read Fudge but there was no signature. He was certain it was nothing to be concerned of and he tossed the card off to the side. Fudge turned his eyes to the cake, with a greedy look on his face. The cake looked delicious but what was inside proved to be more delicious. "Okay, my dear, you can come out now."

A figure slowly rose from the cake and Fudge nearly tipped over his chair.

"You're not the adult entertainment I paid for!" shouted Fudge. "You're Downfall!"

"Happy birthday, Minister Fudge," sang Downfall as he rose out of the cake, before several thick chains bound Fudge to the chair he was sitting in. Downfall responded with a loud cackle, as the Minister of Magic appeared completely helpless. "There won't be any more after this one..."

"I demand at once you untie me you fiend!" shouted Fudge but there was no easy way out.

"Not going to Minister," responded Downfall as he rose completely out of the cake. Thanks to the magic of magic, he did not have one bit of cake on him. "So tell me, Minister? Did you really think you could retire to a private life without answering for all the crimes?"

"I'm still the Minister of Magic, you'll be given the Dementor's Kiss!" shouted Fudge.

"I'm no fool, Cornelius, there are no Dementors left at Azkaban, after Harry Potter rendered them catatonic, even your best Unspeakables can't reverse the effects, the rest have joined Lord Voldemort," stated

Downfall as Fudge winced which caused Downfall to back hand it. "It's just a name, you twit."

"I'll have you arrested!" shouted Fudge. "HELP, SOMEONE HELP, ANYONE HELP, I'M BEING HELD BY A MADMAN!"

"You can shout until you grow hoarse, Minister, no one will hear you but me," stated Downfall. "Your crimes are too numerous but a few brief highlights. You attempted to silence critics of your regime, you bullied the press into printing insane amounts of propaganda, you took bribes from known Death Eaters, you embezzled money from alleged charity donations, including from St. Mungos that really gets on my nerves that one. What do you have to say?"

"Someone will get you in the end," stated Fudge. "Potter, Potter will get you in the end! The Boy-Who-Lived will save us all, from both you and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

Downfall just responded by cackling

"You are truly a fool, Fudge, Potter's thrown out the towel and I can't really blame him, he'll be rode like a horse until he can't go anymore and then he'll be sent to the glue factory when he's outlived his usefulness, such is the nature of the Wizarding World," responded Downfall, as several miniature fireballs appeared on his fingertips. Fudge whimpered like a scared kitten as the fire was just a few inches away from his face. "He did care at one point, but each and every one of you stopped it out of him. Me, I don't give a flying fuck about anything of the Wizarding World. I'll destroy each and everything. While, you haven't been marked as a Death Eater and likely had not directly killed anyone, you're still as dangerous as them based on your inaction and pandering towards what is politically smart. All of the deaths that are going on is your responsibility. Perhaps I would have consented to stay in my cage, if you had worked a little too hard to actually correct the problems again. Then again, I personally have no time to be concerned with what ifs."

Downfall turned before he stopped and turned to the Minister of Magic. Fudge wet himself when he came face to face to Downfall.

"Please don't kill me, I have a family!" begged Fudge.

"Sorry Minister, I can't hear you over the sound of me not giving a damn," responded Downfall before he cackled and the next thing Fudge knew was a flaming dagger coming directly at his throat. Then nothing else would be ever known again.

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The Wizengamot waited impatiently, the Minister of Magic had an announcement that he would have to make. He was late and many of the members of the court were impatient.

"Perhaps we should send someone after the Minister," suggested one of the members of the court.

"Give Fudge a few more minutes, then we'll send someone after him," remarked Amelia Bones crisply but at these words, there was a knock on the door. The member of the court nearest moved to answer the door.

"It's a package," stated the representative of some sort, as he held his wand carefully. It was not jinxed in any way whatsoever. So he opened the package and gave a scream when he saw what inside the box. Several members of the court moved around and once they got a good look at the box, they were all freaking out.

Inside the box, was the decapitated head of Cornelius Fudge, face contorted into a creepy grin, with a "D" burned into his forehead, his severed spinal cord dangling out of the back of his neck.

And I think that's a good enough place to end this chapter as any. Coming up in the next chapter, some Death Eaters try to get themselves a little pocket change, but really is it worth it? Also the usual fun and games, as the battle between Downfall and Voldemort is coming soon, but there are other matters attend to. Looks to be twenty chapters, roughly right now, but who knows.

## Chapter Sixteen: The Bloodletting.

“So what happened this time?” asked Harry in a calm voice, as he entered the Great Hall.

“Nothing much really,” responded Luna. “Just the fact that the Minister of Magic was decapitated and his detached head were sent to the Wizengamot.”

“Only you could be so calm about this, Luna,” responded Neville, shaking his head but his eyes darted to the paper. Thankfully, the Daily Prophet had the sense not to print a picture of the grisly incident but their details were more than enough. Harry took a look at the article, phrases like “mass hysteria of the Wizengamot” and “Aurors fail to protect Minister of Magic”. More talk about demons and black magic, speculation on foolish wizards trying to delve into magic more dangerous than the darkest of dark magic. Then there was a plea for Harry Potter to return to do his duty and save them all. That’s just where Harry turned away.

“So what do you think?” asked Daphne.

“I think we need a new Minister of Magic,” answered Harry swiftly, as he turned his attention to his breakfast, as he saw people chatting around nervously. The teachers were talking.

“They’re talking about cancelling classes today because of the death of the Minister of Magic and yet you seem oddly calm about this,” inputted Astoria as she walked from the Slytherin table, as many of the Slytherins talked, many of them speculating on what their parents needed to do gain more power.

“You’re not having second thoughts about anything?” questioned Daphne and Harry shook his head, before he turned his attention to his breakfast. He thought about the voice in his head that he was pretty certain that was a figment of an overactive imagination. He refused to entertain the possibility that he was killing people without knowing it. Granted, he had imagined wrapping his hands around Fudge’s throat more than once but really, there was no way whatsoever he could be Downfall.

"This could be a blessing in disguise, maybe we'll have a competent Minister of Magic," answered Harry. "The Daily Prophet actually thinks that I'll reconsider my stance on this entire world. I believe I've made myself more than clear."

"You have and I think it's great you're sticking to your convictions Harry," stated Daphne. "It just shows how much you've matured. If you were still the foolish Gryffindor that you were a few months ago, you would have charged headlong into a battle without considering the consequence."

"Well I've grown beyond that, thankfully," answered Harry and he looked at the others. "Just because I've withdrawn from the war, doesn't mean you have to follow suit but don't expect to rely on me."

"I never want to be part of what is basically a cosmic game of chess between Dumbledore and Voldemort anyway, I still curse my Father for getting us involved in this mess to begin with," responded Daphne and Astoria nodded in agreement, she felt her sister had expressed those sentiments well enough.

"War is a tricky thing, there are times that I've wondered what we truly are fighting for, if Harry defeated Voldemort, would that really solve anything?" asked Luna and there were three people who were shaking their heads but Neville looked at them conflicted.

"Neville, I know you feel like you have to fight for obvious reasons," said Harry. "So, I'm only going to offer you one piece of advice and choose to follow it anyway you wish. Pick your fights wisely. Not all battles are worth fighting but even them, more can be learned from a crushing and painful loss than a victory. As I've proven, I learned one thing."

"I understand your stance and I haven't quite decided," remarked Neville. True his parents were tortured into insanity and more recently, his grandmother was murdered, but the more he thought about it, the more he understood that Voldemort was only one problem in a bigger war.

"Looks like I'm about to be bitched out about something I did," muttered Harry as he saw Hermione walking from one side and as an added bonus, he saw Dumbledore approaching him from an entirely different direction. Harry quickly busied himself with eating breakfast.

"Harry, I need to have a word with you, in private!" stated both Dumbledore and Hermione at the same time and both of them looked at each other. Hermione looked slightly embarrassed that she had talked over the Headmaster.

"Sorry, Professor, I can wait," stated Hermione.

"What is it, Miss Granger?" asked Harry completely ignoring Dumbledore and Hermione frowned.

"Harry, the Headmaster wanted a word with you, you just can't ignore him," remarked Hermione and Harry rolled his eyes.

"Mr. Potter is the Emperor of Hogwarts and he can talk to whomever he pleases, whenever he pleases," recited Astoria in a bland voice as the others nodded and Hermione just frowned, but Dumbledore looked on with a hopeless look on his face.

"This entire Downfall thing, has people scared Harry," remarked Hermione slowly if choosing the right words. "There are a lot of people who need someone that they can count on and..."

"Hermione, I really hoped you would have more sense than this," answered Harry as he looked at his former friend. "Downfall is something that's the Ministry of Magic's problem, not mine, just like Lord Voldemort. I tried against Voldemort and I failed. Why even bother fighting a battle that I'm unable to win. As for Downfall..well that's an interesting case. Whatever Downfall is, he's doing something that the Ministry should have done a long time ago. Perhaps if the Ministry or others had been a bit more proactive in dealing with Voldemort before I was born, they wouldn't be having the problems. I doubt the Ministry has any hope of winning now, but I'm doing what I have to do to protect Hogwarts and that's about all I give a damn about..."



"You never used to be this way, Harry, you cared, even on the days where you were at your lowest," said Hermione in a disappointed voice. "I want the old Harry back, the one that fought, even if it was an obvious losing battle."

"You want the old Harry back?" asked Daphne in an amused voice. "Trust me, no you really don't. There were parts of him that were good but the flaws quite outweighed anything. He would have been dead by now, if Harry continued to do what he was doing."

"Look if you want to blame anyone for what I've done, you don't need to look any further than the twinkling twit behind you," answered Harry calmly. "Look, I'm not going to discuss this. The days of me fighting everyone's battles and everyone deciding they can kick me around for their own amusement one day, while turning around and expecting me to fight their little battles for me the next. I'm done, finished, this world can have fun on themselves. If people come out of the woodwork to try and pick up the slack, good for them, but I'm not concerned about anything and I'm not saying any more about this. You're dismissed Miss Granger."

Hermione looked like she wanted to say something but Ron walked over.

"Just let it go Hermione, it's his choice," said Ron who gave Harry a brief sympathetic look before he turned away. He understood why Harry had decided to turn his back on everything but he did not agree with it. Ron and Hermione walked off, getting into a heated argument that Harry could not be bothered listening to.

"Yes, figure Headmaster," prompted Harry and Dumbledore opened his mouth. "No, I'm not going to cancel any classes today, to allow people to mourn a wizard who was responsible for deaths, because he refused to listen to reason. Of course, you should have had me supply Pensieve memories, but that's another matter entirely."

"Harry, this is not the private meeting that I wanted," said Dumbledore.

"I don't have time to meet privately, Dumbledore," answered Harry in a calm voice. "So say your peace and clear off. Let's get this over

with, because we're not going to convince each other of anything. You because you're too stubborn to think you're wrong and me because I'm right about this matter."

"Harry, you know the reason why you will have to deal with this," responded Dumbledore in a disappointed voice.

"How do I know that this reason isn't fabricated?" asked Harry. "Ninety percent of what comes out of your mouth is a lie to begin with. Are you willing to take an Unbreakable Vow that you will tell me the absolute truth no matter what?"

"No Harry, I'm afraid that will not be possible," said Dumbledore calmly in a disappointed voice. "I just hope you will reconsider your actions because I feel it has unleashed this Downfall and I fear what he might do..."

"Another nutcase trying to take over the Wizarding World?" inquired Harry in a mock insightful voice and Dumbledore shook his head.

"Downfall doesn't intend to take over the Wizarding World, I fear that he intends to destroy it," stated Dumbledore.

"Well, as long as he leaves Hogwarts alone, I have no problem with Downfall, but if he steps one foot inside my castle, then I'll teach him a lesson he won't soon forget," remarked Harry as he looked around. "Leave me and inform the teachers to be ready to get to work today..."

"Harry, you can't just tell people to go on with their day as if nothing happened," argued Dumbledore. "The Minister of Magic just was slaughtered violently and it's not something we can go on with."

"We have to, that's what the Minister of Magic would have wanted," said Harry with a brief smile. "Do spread the word that no one is using this minor incident, which really has no effect on Hogwarts to begin with, given the fact that it's out of the Ministry's jurisdiction, to get out of work or class. I've spoken, you're dismissed Dumbledore."

“So, what about this gold that the Dark Lord promised to one of us if we took care of Downfall?” asked a young Death Eater in a hushed voice to his friend as he exited Gringotts, with a smug look of triumph on his face. A rich relative of his overseas had died and had willed him a substantial amount of gold. He was glad he had not participated in the attack on Potter within Azkaban, otherwise the gold would have been transferred straight into Potter’s account. “I mean, it’s not like I really need the gold, but five thousand Galleons and the Dark Lord will be pleased if we take care of this problem for him.”

“Yes, I think it’s more about satisfying the Dark Lord,” agreed the second Death Eater but he looked around. There were no Aurors at Diagon Alley right now, most of the Ministry workers have been called into work because of the death of the Minister of Magic. Most of Diagon Alley had shut down; the only places to remain open were Gringotts and the Leaky Cauldron. Gringotts, naturally because goblins could care less about the death of the human Minister and the Leaky Cauldron because it never closed no matter what the circumstances were. “But, I’ll be honest, this Downfall, he just makes my skin crawl when I’ve heard about him...”

“You’re not scared of him, are you?” taunted the first Death Eater. “I mean sure he seems powerful, but he’s not really all that great. The Dark Lord will crush Downfall in an instant...”

“Of course, I don’t doubt the Dark Lord’s power,” agreed the second Death Eater. “I don’t know if it’s worth five hundred Galleons to fight something so powerful, especially considering the fact that the Dark Lord could eliminate the problem himself easily for free.”

“Ours is not to question the Dark Lord, ours is to do what he says, no matter how eccentric he’s gotten as of late,” stated the first Death Eater as he looked around. “So, are you part of the attack tonight?”

“Yeah, Amelia Bones, she’s the most likely person to be the Minister of Magic after all this went down and she’s also the one that poses a potential thorn in the side of the Dark Lord,” answered the second Death Eater. “Lucius has attempted to arrange this little attack, to gain favor of the Dark Lord, of course, he’s not going to be present,

but he thinks he'll use us new recruits as fire power to improve his status with the Dark Lord."

"Well, it could be worse, Bellatrix Lestrange could be in charge, who knows what she'd put us new recruits through," remarked the first Death Eater with a shudder. "It's not going to be all new recruits, the Lestrange brothers have agreed to join us, they owe Lucius a favor, something that he covered up, that they don't want to get out or rather that Rodolphus does not want to get back to Bellatrix I think."

"Could be anything really, but at least they might be able to help us succeed, I would hate to be the one to tell the Dark Lord that we failed another mission," answered the second Death Eater as he looked around. "No one's here, creepy isn't it?"

"Yes, especially with no Knockturn Alley, just a big black pile of ashes, hundreds of years of hard effort and artifacts gone, not to mention all the Galleons that certain people lost," said the first Death Eater, as he looked over his shoulder, but he heard a sound from behind him, almost like a humming noise. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes, it sounds almost like...." Stated the second Death Eater but what it sounded like was never heard, as a bright blue fireball flew right towards the air. The Death Eater never had a chance to defend himself, as he was vaporized almost instantly from the impact and the sadistic face of Downfall swooped down. Two dark spells were sent to him, but a bright red shield appeared and absorbed them instantly, before the first Death Eater was hoisted up off the ground, with Downfall perched on the broomstick. The Death Eater dangled, his wand violently ripped from his hand and thrown to the side.

"Good day to you, sir," said Downfall in a wicked tone of voice as the Death Eater trembled. "I understand that you have plans to attack a potential candidate for the Minister of Magic position and I do think it would be the proper thing to tell me when this is happening, so I can kill your little playmates."

"Never, I won't betray the Dark Lord like that," said the Death Eater but Downfall just responded by cackling madly.

“Your funeral,” said Downfall seriously and he looked right in the eyes of the Death Eater. A brief struggle, as Downfall forced his way through the wall, busting his mental defenses, however meager they were into oblivion. The Death Eater screamed in absolute horror as his mind was ripped to spreads as Downfall ripped the information from his mind, along with several other minor plans that this young man had knowledge of. By the time he was done, he was screaming bloody murder and shrieking in absolute agony. “Thanks for the information, now it’s time to die.”

Downfall dropped the Death Eater, who was still shrieking in pain and with a loud crack; he landed right on his head. His neck snapped immediately and Downfall looked down, bowing his head in a moment, but suddenly, there were several spells that blasted. One came close enough to knocking him off of balance.

“I warned you Aurors, I really did,” remarked Downfall in a remorseful tone of voice, as he lifted a crystal vial from his pocket and tapped a finger to it. The vile began to light up as Downfall dropped it down the ground and blasted up into the air, cackling madly.

The Aurors were perplexed for a second, before the vial exploded, releasing white mist into the air. Seconds later, they all collapsed to the ground, feeling utterly hopeless and being bombarded by their worse memories ever. Some of them were screaming in absolute agony, as the mist faded but the effects remained lingering in the minds of the Aurors for some time to come.

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“I got the most interesting letter from Mum,” remarked Ginny as she sat in the Room of Requirement with Harry and Daphne. “She told me to be a bit more subtle in getting your attention, because it might push you away from what you need to you...”

“Well that’s believable, but I doubt she’s the right person to judge what I need to do,” answered Harry as Ginny smiled sadly. If she was still interested in Harry as more than a friend, she doubted she would have any chance with him to begin with. His relationship with Daphne was one roadblock but also her own mother’s own heavy handed

attempts to push them together would sabotage any chance she would have. "The thing is, your mother might be writing these words but I'm hearing Dumbledore's thoughts behind them."

"So she was doing this without Dumbledore's input?" inquired Daphne.

"Yes and I think Dumbledore caught onto everything that she was trying," responded Ginny with a nod. "Mum did have an odd obsession of telling me that you and I might be married someday, even before she met you. I guess she's the one who built my that fanatical crush I had on the Boy-Who-Lived, but that's all in the past."

"She didn't give up because of a little thing like the potions that you were trying to slip me had no effect whatsoever," said Harry who had actually tested one of the love potions but it had no effect on him whatsoever. The ruse that he was pulling where he was immune to them like the Imperius curse proved to be valid.

"You know how Mum is, she's stubborn when she gets an idea in her mind," said Ginny. "She still refuses to acknowledge that you're an adult."

"Well, I had the Burrow rebuilt, so I can send your parents out of Grimmauld Place, before I convert it into an orphanage for Muggleborn children," said Harry.

"I bet Black's mother would have been real thrilled with that," commented Daphne.

"Well, I'll remove all of those foul paintings and then it will be fit for habitation, trust me, a permanent sticking charm doesn't work that well on a painting that has been burned off the wall," said Harry as all three of them laughed. "I'm sure I'm breaking some magical taboo about how paintings are sentient and deserved to be treated with respect or some such rubbish but do you hear this?"

"Hear what Harry?" asked Daphne and Ginny looked curious.

"It's the sound of me not caring," remarked Harry as they laughed again. "I think you should keep up the charade on your end, even if you don't have access to the potions. Because if your so hopelessly and devoted infatuated with me like your mother and Dumbledore are lead to believe, you won't just let a little thing like being told not to do something derail your plans."

"No, I doubt it," said Ginny but she looked frustrated. "Hermione is breathing down my neck and Ron's giving me odd looks. A year ago, he would have blown his stack but I guess things change."

"Everything is going to plan, trust me," said Harry and Ginny looked at Harry in a skeptical manner.

"I hope you're right Harry, whatever plan you have, it's going to work in the end," said Ginny slowly, there were brief moments where she wondered if Harry had really quit or if he was still manipulating certain matters beyond the scene.

"Hope is the crutch for all but it is mostly foolish to retain it in these dark times," commented Harry before he shook his head. "Sorry, I've been talking to Luna too much..."

"No I get what you're saying, I think," answered Daphne.

"Well, I better get going, have loads of homework to do," said Ginny slowly.

"OWL year is a bitch, isn't it?" commented Harry and Ginny nodded.

"That might be an understatement Harry," remarked Daphne as Ginny just turned around.

"Talk to you both later when I get the chance," said Ginny as she left and Daphne turned to Harry.

"What is this plan of yours anyway?" asked Daphne. "And more importantly, can we really trust her to carry it out?"

“She’ll do it and it involves a minimum of effort, but it has nothing to do with Voldemort or rather very little to do with Voldemort, it seems like there’s a lot in this world that has to do with him, but never mind that,” said Harry, as he wrapped his arms around Daphne, as she leaned into his shoulder with a slightly content look.

“People expect way too much from you sometimes,” said Daphne. “You do have your duties but now they want you to deal with both Downfall and Voldemort.”

“Let them wipe each other out, but if this Downfall is half as powerful as most people think he is, then Voldemort might be put six feet under where he belongs,” said Harry. “I just wonder what the future will hold.”

“If there is a future given the rate the Wizarding World is declining,” said Daphne before they leaned into each other and suddenly any thoughts of the world outside of them faded away. Both thought everything was moving at the pace it should, what their relationship would hold in a few years, if even there was a relationship in a few years, would be a concern for later.

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Amelia Bones returned home after a very hard day of work at the Ministry. To say there had been chaos ever since that grisly sight at the Wizengamot would be a gross understatement. Most of the Ministry was freaking out and several people resigned out of protest. Now there needed to be a new Minister of Magic and Amelia heard rumors that she was one of the names that had been talked about, in a favorable manner. To be honest, being the Minister of Magic was a thankless job with no benefits whatsoever. If everything was going right, it was the hard work of the employees at the Ministry of Magic. If everything was going wrong, it must be the fault of the Minister of Magic. Still, someone had to step up.

The Ministry was in bad shape because they put their hopes in an underage wizard, who from all indications, cracked under the pressure. Not that she blamed the boy, but it was frustrating that it was pretty much agreed that Harry Potter was the only person who



could defeat He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Many at the Ministry were trying to force the issue, sending letters to Potter and they were returned with curses attached. To be honest, the boy was untouchable within Hogwarts and it would be hard to convince him that they needed his help. Not because of any sense of duty, because quite frankly after all the Ministry put Harry Potter through, he owed them nothing. In fact, Amelia had warned Fudge a year ago, that his entire smear campaign against Potter was going to blow up in his face and it had happened rather spectacularly.

Suddenly, a humming noise and a blur blasted through the windows, shattering the glass, sending it flying every which direction. Amelia could only just barely put up a shield to block the glass slicing her to ribbons and her eyes widened her horror, words having failed her, as she shakily reached for her wand.

“Hello, Madam Bones, my name is Downfall, perhaps you’ve heard of me,” said Downfall as he began to cackle before calmly brushing the pieces of glass off of her shoulder.

“Yes, I’ve heard of you and I’m not sure that I approve of what you’re doing, it might be Death Eaters right now but if innocent people get caught in the crossfire...” said Amelia but Downfall interrupted with a loud round of cackling, as he held his hand up, miniature white fireballs rising from the fingertips.

“Innocent people, now that’s an oxymoron, we’re all no good self serving bastards in this world, it’s just some are far more blatant about it and others only have mere moments on occasion, but that doesn’t excuse them,” said Downfall. “For the Wizarding World to be saved, magic must be eradicated for all corners of the world.”

Amelia looked up, if this Downfall, whatever he was, was going to kill her, she assumed she would be dead.

“You assumed right, Madam Bones, I’m in a good mood today, I killed a few Death Eaters and I’ve stumbled about an assassination plot on your person,” said Downfall and Amelia Bones just looked at him. “Yes, I know big surprise, you being an important politician and you having a couple of near misses over the summer as well.”

Downfall stopped, pausing as he looked at Madam Bones.

“So we can do this the easy way or the hard way, I’m sure you have a contingency plan in place,” said Downfall and Amelia nodded slowly. “Smart of you, I would use it to clear out, within the next two minutes and I’ll handle the Death Eaters...oh and don’t think about getting the Aurors involved, because the last Aurors who tried to take me out are in the long term ward at St. Mungos, screaming in absolute terror, even after many sedative potions.”

“What did you do to them?” demanded Amelia.

“Better for you to not know,” said Downfall with a sadistic glint visible from underneath the mask. “So clear out within two minutes or really about a minute and a half by now or we do things the hard way. The, you die a bit sooner than you might have in a violently brutal, yet somehow creative manner way. It’s your choice, I really don’t care.”

Amelia turned and went for her emergency Portkey, thinking that she would just contact the Aurors in about thirty minutes, perhaps overwhelming Downfall. No matter how many Death Eaters he killed, he still presented a danger.

“If you want to condemn your Aurors to insanity and or death, that’s your problem, Madam Bones, but you’re right about the fact I present a danger,” said Downfall before he responded with a loud round of sadistic laughter, before he cleared his throat and pointed to an imaginary watch. “The clock is ticking, Madam Bones, do clear out before it runs out. Time waits for no one.”

With a bit of hesitation, Amelia grabbed the Portkey. It was weighing on her mind heavily what to do. If she had returned with Aurors, there was a chance that they would all be killed or worse. If she had failed to return with Aurors, then she would be allowing a sadistic madman to leave freely.

“Yes, quite the paradox,” agreed Downfall as Madam Bones left with a solid pop and Downfall sat in a chair by the fire, busily making himself a really hot cup of tea, as he waited for his guests to arrive.

He would not have to wait for long.

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Several pops came from outside, as the Death Eaters were in the house or rather outside the house.

"Okay, you know the drill, let's get in, kill the woman, go home, and get to bed," said Rodolphus Lestrage in a gruff voice, as he walked to the door, before he raised his wand. It clicked open easily, as the group walked inside.

"Shattered window, there's something up," stated one of the Death Eater.

"Must have been a bunch of punk Muggle kids, nothing to worry about," said another Death Eater, in a dismissive voice as they walked inside. "The bitch looks to have dozed off in her chair, this should be easy, one dead blood traitor, coming up..."

"Good evening, boys, might I interest you in a cup of tea!" shrieked Downfall as he spun around and threw the cup of tea right at the Death Eater. The Death Eater screamed, as he was burned with the scalding hot tea and Downfall blasted him backwards, causing him to smash headfirst into the wall, cracking his head open. Blood dripped to the ground. The Death Eaters stepped back. "The phrase you're looking for is GET HIM!"

"GET HIM!" shouted Rodolphus but two Death Eaters, in their haste to collect on the gold promised, accidentally struck each other down with Killing Curses. Downfall rose into the air and flaming daggers impaled two of the Death Eaters, knocking them out. Several curses flew through the air, but each of them was blocked and deflected. Many of them looked like it hit but it had no effect whatsoever.

"I've got him," stated a Death Eater, but suddenly his head was whipped backwards by a very powerful blast of magic. He did not have time to know what spell had hit him, as he slumped to the ground, neck completely snapped from the impact.

“Not even close, sport,” said Downfall as he continued to cackle madly, before he threw several flaming daggers down, impacting more than a few Death Eaters. Some of them had curses attached to them, that reduced their organs to nothing, slowly and painfully. He saw Rabastan Lestrangle kneel down, rolling back his sleeve and he frowned, before a purple light shot through the air. The Death Eater screamed as his dark mark arm was sliced off. “You weren’t trying to contact, your wretched master, were you? That wasn’t very sporting...”

“CRUCIO!” shouted Rodolphus in a loud voice as the curse struck Downfall clearly but the figure just stood there, as Rodolphus pushed all of his power into the curse.

“Not even a tickle,” said Downfall before he completely threw off the curse. Another Death Eater threw miniature blast of fire but Downfall dowsed it easily. “You call that fire. THIS IS FIRE BOY!”

A blast of fire of multiple colors struck the Death Eater, burning his flesh off the bones within seconds and he was reduced down to nothing. Two flaming spikes were aimed into the rib cages of the Death Eaters and all of their ribs shattered at once, puncturing their internal organs. They slumped to the ground, killed almost instantly, as Downfall turned slowly, to Rodolphus, before standing on his hands, preventing him from receiving his wand.

“Tell me, where is your master hiding these days?” asked Downfall.

“Fuck you, I’ll never talk,” said Rodolphus but Downfall roughly pushed his head up.

“What fools these Death Eaters be,” muttered Downfall under his breath. “Always wanting to do things the hard way, but it’s the fun way to me. I’ll make what you did to the Longbottoms look like a mild concussion.”

Downfall pushed into his head as he screamed in agony. Rodolphus was attempting to gouge his eyes out, struggling in pain, as his mind was assaulted, slowly pulled to pieces.

“Thanks for the information dirt bag,” said Downfall. “Azkaban, we were right Riddle. Well kiss goodbye to your secure base, because I’ll destroy everything inside and I hope that includes you.”

Rodolphus was dropped to the ground, drool hanging over his mouth. He would not have the mental capabilities to breath and thus would die within moments. Downfall left without another word, he had other matters to attend to.

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For miles around, Azkaban could be seen bursting into flames, with many of the prisoners inside. The flames shot up, burning the prison and all inside, trapped within their cells and unable to flee until it was too late. Once the fire had magically extinguished itself, there were no survivors and very few remains.

Unfortunately, by some stroke misfortune, Lord Voldemort and many of the members of his Inner Circle had been elsewhere during the time but such was life sometimes.

And that closes up another chapter. There will be repercussions as Downfall’s latest strike is the one with the most casualties. I’m sure many of you will say, what about the innocents in the prison, who were not branded by Riddle? And I’m sure Downfall will say, “what about them” in response, before he cackles into the night, throwing fire at anything that moved. He has his moments that he is charitable, few and far between, and Madam Bones was rather lucky she caught him at one of those few charitable moments. Should they ever meet again...well she’s really taking a gamble with her life.

I think there’s a difference between this Downfall and that Downfall, as how they are presented personality wise. Granted, there was many people under the mask in the other story, but the personality, as I saw it and I’m the author, so my word does tend to hold a bit more weight, as a ice-veined killer. This Downfall on the other hand is out of his mind and doesn’t care who knows it. Name is the same, motives are the same, to an extent but the personalities are very different.

Next chapter, Voldemort loses his mind(er wait a minute here), Dumbledore is desperate to stop Downfall, The Ministry is even more desperate to bring him down, and Harry just doesn't care what anyone thinks. Plus, Downfall makes arrangements to bring down the person who he feels is single handily responsible for the sad state the Wizarding World is in. Tune in and have fun.

## Chapter Seventeen: Murderous Intent.

“Azkaban burned to the ground, Azkaban destroyed, hundreds dead , not that it’s a loss most of them, but how did our most secure facility burn to the ground?” demanded Scrimgeour “There were charms on it, there was no way that it could have been simply destroyed. The damage that happened during the fight between You-Know-Who and Potter was done by powerful magic but it was repaired in a few hours.”

“All of our attempts to reconstruct the prison have gone on in vain,” said a senior Auror in an apologetic tone of voice. I’m not any more pleased with it, but a fifth of our population was in that prison...”

“A sad statistic, regardless of the reasons,” commented Madam Bones in an even voice but she wondered, like the rest of them, how Azkaban could just be wiped out just like that. “Downfall could have easily killed me last night, and he blocked the Aurors from arriving until he was finished slaughtering the Death Eaters.”

“Indeed, we only managed to get in just as Downfall had vacated the premises,” said Kingsley in a deep, even voice. “You-Know-Who wouldn’t have even been able to block us out for that one, which makes me consider the rumors...”

“Yes those rumors, that have many of my Aurors completely terrified to go out on distress calls for fear they might encounter Downfall,” answered Scrimgeour. “Pure hoax, there’s no way a demon could have thrived in this dimension, especially, if you’ve remembered your basics in your first year in Auror training, someone would have to summon him there and would have been able to control him. There are only two wizards alive who have the power to summon a demon. One of them is having all of his followers slaughtered by them and the other is just as terrified with this situation as we are.”

“That we know of, it couldn’t have been anyone from outside of this country,” stated another Auror.

“Peters, we try to keep tabs on any notable witches and wizards, and there are many with considerable power, but they are outstripped by

Dumbledore and You-Know-Who,” said Scrimgeour in a would be patient voice, before he looked around and sat down. He could almost see the Howlers coming into his office. If it was not enough that the Minister of Magic had been killed, Azkaban was burned to the ground, and to make matters worse, Potter had decided to take his ball and go home. “I’m considering sending a letter to Potter and hoping that he would consider helping us again, because we do need him now more than ever.”

“I would highly advise against it Rufus,” said Madam Bones in a cautious voice. “Don’t stir the fire anymore than it needs to. If Mr. Potter wants to come around, then he will but it’s well within his rights to refuse any help. Don’t forget that a Wizengamot court made the ruling that he was declared in error as the Boy-Who-Lived. As underhanded as it might seem, that’s what was ruled. I don’t like it anymore than you do but that’s just the cards we were dealt.”

Madam Bones, perhaps soon to be the Minister of Magic, had many things on her mind. Like exactly why Downfall spared her. It could have been some measure of respect, because she tried to be as fair as possible with this government, but he could have just wanted to build up some hope before he pulled the rug underneath all of them. It would be a much harsher collapse that way.

“I might be Minister within the next couple of days and I may have to do something controversial,” said Madam Bones slowly. “I’m thinking about lifting Dumbledore’s suspension from the Wizengamot...before you panic, it’s just a merely a thought and he’ll be reinstated to the court as just a member, not a Chief Warlock. His knowledge may be a valuable tool and I’d rather have the Ministry have access to it, then to have him do something on his own and put us in a worse state.”

“Dumbledore’s damaged goods,” warned Scrimgeour. “I wouldn’t do it, Amelia, anything he’s going to do is for his own good and nothing else. He might seem useful but bringing him back to the Ministry, especially at this state, it could be more trouble than it’s worth. Especially considering he might use the Ministry as an attempt to get Potter back before he’s ready to listen to reason and ruin everything for good.”



“Just merely a thought Rufus, I’m not Minister as of yet, and the Wizengamot might appoint someone else,” said Amelia Bones, who weighed the positives and negatives of Albus Dumbledore. He brought many negatives to the table but there were a few good qualities that could be useful. “It’s not like he’ll want to come back.”

“He will,” said another elder Auror. “I’ve known Dumbledore for years, he craves a bit of the spotlight, even if he doesn’t show it. He still has his supporters and they might pose a problem.”

“He might do something to draw Downfall to the Ministry,” inputted Kingsley calmly and Amelia nodded, she had not considered that.

“We’ll come back that the idea, once everything is evaluated,” said Amelia, closing her eyes. The fallout from the destruction of Azkaban was not going to be pretty.

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After Defense, Harry and Daphne were behind after the rest of the sixth years had left. As usual, the complete leveling of Azkaban had lead to mass hysteria in the Great Halls. These moments were becoming so commonplace that Harry just went on with his day, listening to the input of his friends and others. He could not be concerned with Death Eaters dying or crazed madmen destroying a prison. Perhaps it would force the Ministry to come up with a permanent solution to deal with it, although Harry doubted it very much.

Once the desks were cleared up, Harry had just realized that he and Daphne were not alone.

“Harry...I mean Professor Potter...I was wondering if I could have a word with you?” asked Ron.

“I daresay that can be arranged,” responded Harry. “Is about the class Mr. Weasley?”

"No not about the class, I just got a letter from Mum..." stated Ron as he trailed off. "She told me to invite you home for the Christmas holidays."

"Your mother still lives in the Place-That-Cannot-Be-Named, correct?" asked Daphne sharply and Ron responded with nod, he was always a bit uncomfortable because of Daphne. "So let me get this straight, your mother told you to invite Harry to a house that he already owns."

"Actually that does seem a bit silly," said Ron as he nodded his head in agreement. "But, I'm just passing along the message, as Mum gave it, she seems to think it will do her some good."

"What she thinks and what Harry we'll do are two different things, Weasley," said Daphne but Harry grabbed her hand.

"Daphne, I can handle this," said Harry before he took a deep breath. "What your mother thinks and what I actually plan on doing are two different things. In fact, I'm not planning to leave this castle, this is my home right now and you might want to pass a message back to her when you right back to tell her that I won't be joining your family for the Christmas holidays."

"Sure, I guess," stated Ron nervously, he wanted to ask Harry about his new found attitude, about not caring about the Wizarding World or the innocents dying but he could not quite muster up the nerve to do so. "What is it Harry?"

"Tell her that the Burrow will be ready a week before Christmas, new and improved and she is to clear out of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place," said Harry calmly. "Bit of an early Christmas present, so I can completely cut my ties with that part of my life."

"Why did you do that Harry?" asked Ron.

"I sort of feel bad about the Burrow burning down, because Voldemort was after you and Ginny because of me, but now I can completely close that chapter of my life and get on with the rest of it," said Harry.

“Also, pass along this message to your charming little sister,” said Daphne in a spiteful voice and Ron spun around. “Tell her that if she keeps making eyes at Harry, I’m going to rip said eyes out and make her floss her teeth with her optical nerves.”

“Er, I’ll be sure to pass on that message,” said Ron in an uncomfortable manner. He never liked to get into the middle of a dispute between two girls, especially when one of them was his sister. The female sex could be scarier than Voldemort at his very worst.

“Is there something else you want to talk about to us Ron?” asked Harry and Ron looked but lost his nerve completely, before shaking his head. Hermione had tried to get Harry to talk to her and the last one had gotten her prefect duties suspended until after the Christmas holidays, something that Hermione did not take too kindly to.

“No Harry, there’s nothing, see you in class I suppose,” said Ron as he walked away. A year ago, he would have blown up at Harry but now he was thinking through his actions.

“So what were we going to do before we got interrupted?” asked Harry. “Because I have a full hour with nothing to do and I know you don’t either.”

“Something that requires a lot of privacy spells,” said Daphne with a mischievous smirk, as she walked over, sitting on a desk, as Harry made sure the door was completely locked, along with the windows. Not too long about, Harry would have wasted this hour stressing about Voldemort, but he enjoyed how he was spending it now much better.

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“Lord Voldemort is not too happy,” said Voldemort in a cold, emotionless voice devoid of any sympathy whatsoever as he looked at his remaining Death Eaters. His numbers had been sliced in half, more than in half, he had a quarter of his Death Eaters. He still had a few members of the Inner Circle like Lucius and Bellatrix remaining. Wormtail and Snape had remained alive, having not been allowed in on the secret of the Azkaban base. Both of them had been failures,

whether it because of how cowardly they were or that they had decided to sell out his plans with Dumbledore. He only kept them around because he had uses for them but he mostly kept those two out of the loop. Other than that, it was mostly low ranking Death Eaters. Much to his utter displeasure, Klea Shae had also survived, having been outside of Azkaban on a mission at the time. “The perfect base, on that the Ministry, despite a misfire of Potter getting away, had not caught onto and in one instant, that meddling fool, Downfall. Demon, wizard, cross dressing troll, I don’t care what he is, I gave my Death Eaters a simple task to eliminated and they proved once again what epic failures each and every one of you are.”

Loud canned boos echoed, hissing and jeering the Death Eaters with a mere press of the button. Voldemort adjusted his toupee, now wearing a fully head of curly blond hair, as he looked at his remaining followers with contempt.

“Lord Voldemort has believed that there would always be fools to stand up to him because of his great power,” said Voldemort and a pause before another button was pressed, with more boos. “I mean, Lord Voldemort is only the greatest wizard to ever live and without peer. No one could defeat me in a straight up duel. Dumbledore would have fell had the Ministry not interfered in my business at the Department of Mysteries. Potter would have failed had it not been for a stroke of implausible luck. Lord Voldemort is the greatest wizard that ever lived and don’t you forget it.”

The sound of children cheering joyfully could be heard in the modified base of operation.

“Lord Voldemort should have thought of this before, the botched attack at Bones Manor and Lucius we will be having words about you overstepping your bounds before too long, and the destruction of my fortress at Azkaban, all of the attacks prove that Downfall is more powerful than I could have ever realized, as much as it pains me to admit that,” said Voldemort. “Therefore, Lord Voldemort has come to one conclusion. The thought struck me, Lord Voldemort must have a diversion so he could properly deal with Downfall and the fact is my Death Eaters keep dying. That can’t happen much longer. Dumbledore perhaps, no he would attempt to redeem Downfall

because he is a fool. As much as it would please Lord Voldemort for Dumbledore to light up like an overpriced Muggle firework, that will not be in the cards."

"Aw," said Bellatrix in a disappointed voice, a bit put off that she would not get to witness Dumbledore spontaneously combust in his ill fated attempts to try and make Downfall see the error of his ways.

"You'll live Bella, you'll live," said Voldemort in a fatherly manner. "There is only one person that I feel could help me defeat Downfall. We need him, we need a hero and Lord Voldemort feels that deep down, through all the bitterness, through all the resentment, there lies a selfless hero within Harry Potter that we can exploit for our own malicious benefit...yes Klea Shae what do you have to bitch about this time?"

Voldemort pressed a button, signaling the sound of groaning on his sound apparatus.

"The old team up with my enemy to face off against a more powerful enemy, my Lord?" asked Klea Shae. "Isn't that a bit played out?"

"No more played out than needless whining about everything I do," said Voldemort. "Don't make me lock you inside a room with Bellatrix at that time of the month."

Klea Shae paled at the very thought of that and he decided perhaps it would not be best to bring up any unoriginal aspects of the Dark Lord's plan at least for today.

"So we'll all clear that a plan must be made to get into touch with Potter," said Voldemort. "Lucius, you are to go to Hogwarts and attempt to meet Potter before the Christmas holidays."

"Why me my Lord?" asked Lucius.

"Because Lord Voldemort said so," said Voldemort in an agitated voice before he added bitterly. "It's not like they're going to send you into Azkaban, are they?"

"Good point, my Lord," said Lucius as he bowed.

"Of course it was a good point Lucius, it was said by Lord Voldemort," said Voldemort as he rolled his eyes before a button had broadcasted a canned recording of a bunch of teenage girls saying "WELL, DUH" as Voldemort looked amused. "Plans are to be made, the murders, the rapes, and the needless just being plain mean can wait for a moment. Lord Voldemort with triumph."

The sound of children cheering could be heard at this proclamation of power and with that the meeting was dismissed.

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"So Azkaban?" asked Harry as he was in his office.

"Yes, Azkaban, Potter, the place where the Death Eaters are going to rejoin their filthy hypocritical half blood master," echoed the sadistic voice from within Harry's head. "I know you're not stupid, you pieced it together..."

"It wouldn't have made any difference if I would have told anyone," responded Harry evenly and he could hear the echoing laugh of Downfall within his head.

"True, true, too true, that's why I took the problem well into hand, Azkaban is nothing more than a smoking crater, but a shame really that Riddle wasn't inside and I think I might have missed a few of his more fanatical followers," remarked Downfall.

"Well you can't have everything...I can't believe I'm actually humoring this," said Harry.

"We both know that you can try and ignore me all you want but I'll be with you, Harry," said Downfall before he laughed madly. "Trust me, everything will work out."

"Trust you, trust a demented voice within my head, that I'm not even sure if it's a figment of my own imagination or not?" asked Harry.

"The sooner you accept that we are a part of each other, the healthier your life will be," said Downfall in a calm manner before he broke into laughter. "Live with your delusions Potter, I'm not really doing anything that you've never thought about."

"Perhaps," said Harry grudgingly. He doubted he could begin to guess what exactly triggered this. Perhaps he was Downfall unwillingly, given his life, developing some kind of multiple personality disorder would not be out of the realm of possibility. The loss to Voldemort might have just made him mentally crack. "It will be over soon, once Voldemort is finished, maybe I can get on with my life."

"If there is a life left for you to get onto," said Downfall before he broke out into laughter. "Seriously, you're overanalyzing it. I'm you without a complete lack of morals, ethics, or anything else that might be keeping you from giving the Wizarding World the fate it concerns. I'm not Voldemort, he just wants to make people suffer and rule. I want to put this entire wretched world out of its misery."

"I'm done, don't bother me again," said Harry.

"We both know you won't tell anyone of our arrangement and if you had the balls to kill yourself, you would have done it years ago," said Downfall before he cackled. "Besides a small part of you hangs onto hope, just like others, that something will work out for the better. For the meantime, go on with living your life but expect me to take charge when I feel a bunch of twits need to get smacked down into their proper place."

"Just one question, what about the Aurors, the Daily Prophet says they were terrified witless?" questioned Harry and Downfall just appeared to be amused.

"There were hundreds of Dementors lying around in a catatonic state in the Ministry of Magic, as the greatest minds of Wizarding Britain attempted to revive them to guard the most foul prisoners ever, it was not difficult to make off with a dozen and harvest their remains into something that would keep most in check," said Downfall. "With the weapons I have the potential to create, I can have every witch and wizard in this country, and hell even all the Muggles, wetting

themselves in terror. But I won't do it, because I want them to learn the lessons much too late before I destroy them."

"Do what you must and I'll do what I must, but don't expect me to lay down and take you using my body," said Harry.

"Try and stop me if you think you can, but you'll just fail," responded Downfall. "Have a nice day Harry, while you still can."

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"Downfall is becoming more of an issue than Voldemort, I'm afraid," responded Dumbledore at the latest meeting of the Order of the Phoenix, as the members looked intently. "Voldemort's aims are clear, Downfall's are a bit less so. He's burned Knockturn Alley and Azkaban to the ground. While Knockturn Alley is not too much of an issue thanks to their less than desirable consumers, Azkaban burning is an issue. The Ministry holding cells are not enough to hold the number of followers for Voldemort."

"Sounds to me that Downfall's not going to bother with allowing the Death Eaters to make it to Azkaban," inputted Moody. "Albus, I'm warning you, this is one matter where you should not even try to meddle in..."

"I concur, the Ministry of Magic is reluctant to step forward, Downfall is much more than they're willing to fight," said Kingsley and Dumbledore sighed, as he put his fingers to the bridge of his nose.

"I cannot sit idle, but perhaps if we work towards defeating Voldemort, than perhaps Downfall will lose interest in what he's doing," said Dumbledore but he had realized this was an impossible endeavor. According to the prophecy, there was only one person that could defeat Voldemort.

"I don't know why you allow Potter to get away with this Dumbledore, it's obvious that Potter and Downfall are the same person, I'm astonished that no one has figured this out, not even the Dark Lord has caught on but then again, he's been more eccentric than ever



since his failed possession of Potter,” said Snape but the Order just ignored Snape, paying him no mind whatsoever.

“I will attempt to find a way to reach through to Harry, but I might make better progress, corresponding with a brick wall,” said Dumbledore. “Another matter, is that we have to find new Headquarters after the Christmas holidays, as Harry has sent us an eviction notice.”

“Yes, I’ve received that as well,” said Molly in a bit bitterly. “He can’t just kick us out of the house...”

“Molly, I’m afraid he can, it is his house,” said Arthur in a calm voice. “Although he waited until the Burrow was rebuilt and the wards rebuilt better than ever, he didn’t have to do that...”

“No, he didn’t,” agreed Molly who was angered that Ron had not tried harder to invite Harry home for Christmas. He needed to be away from that Greengrass girl and spend some time along with Ginny. She had dreamed for years that Harry would marry her little girl, encouraging Ginny’s obsession with the Boy-Who-Lived. Ginny seemed a bit irritated with it recently, but until the Greengrass girl got involved, they were slowly developing a friendship. “Still, Harry shouldn’t be in that castle for the holidays.”

“There are a lot of things that brat shouldn’t do but he does anyway,” said Snape. “Like impersonating a demon and setting fire to everything just because he lost one battle to the Dark Lord.”

“Severus, it’s been agreed that Harry is not Downfall, it’s just not possible, even though Harry’s power is above average, Downfall’s are off any scale,” said Dumbledore calmly in a look that indicated he did not want argue this matter any further. The meeting continued, trading tales of intelligence gathered but it was not for the first time that Dumbledore felt they were in a holding pattern until Harry had came around and accepted his destiny.

“Nice warning Daphne, Ron was scared to death to give it, he said that I should back off,” said Ginny in an amused tone of voice, as she met up with Daphne and Harry, just before dinner one day. Both of them nodded.

“Well to be fair, it was your words that I used,” said Daphne.

“Yes, true, but you did carry them out,” replied Ginny as they walked down, Harry checking the Marauder’s Map, just in case someone was coming. He saw three dots approaching on the map and only relaxed slightly when he saw that they were Astoria, Luna, and Neville. While he left enough hints about their charade, Daphne and Harry had not let them exactly in the loop with everything.

“Better make yourself scarce Ginny, I wouldn’t take any chances, take the North passageway and it will lead you to the Great Hall,” said Harry and Ginny nodded, and seconds later the others walked forward.

“Something’s happening in the Great Hall, that you should take a look at Harry, all of the teachers are freaking out,” said Neville.

“What could it be?” asked Daphne.

“Something really stupid, no doubt,” answered Harry as they walked forward and immediately, he saw Lucius Malfoy and another Death Eater that he could not recognize, held at wand point by five of the teachers and Dumbledore, with a few of the seventh year Gryffindors joining in as well.

“Ah, Mr. Potter, just the wizard I wanted to see,” said Lucius in an excited voice. “I wish to have a word with you about something that you would find interesting.”

“Stand down,” ordered Harry to the teachers and students, with most of them agreeing, with the exception of Dumbledore but then again, Albus Dumbledore never had seemed to have much sense.

“Harry, I must strongly advise...” argued Dumbledore but he was struck silence.

"Wands won't work in the Great Hall right now, one of the perks of being the sole controller of the Hogwarts wards," said Harry as he turned to Lucius and his mysterious Death Eater companion. "Lucius, this had better be worth my time."

"Believe me Mr. Potter, is more than worth your time, just give me ten minutes to convince you of that," said Lucius.

"You have five," responded Harry, as the others stepped back.

"I trust you have heard the rumors of Downfall and what this force is capable of," said Lucius. "How he torched Azkaban to the ground, killing a number of the Dark Lord's followers to the ground. Needless to say, the Dark Lord is none too pleased with this."

"No, losing your followers is never too pleasant, but I don't concern myself with Downfall, he's not the problem, in fact if Downfall and Voldemort wipe each other out, so much the better, far fewer problems for the world to deal with and if one defeats the other, the other will be weakened enough that maybe an ambitious hero could finish the weakened victor off," said Harry calmly. "I'm not going to bother myself with a battle, especially one that it's going to do myself more harm than good to get involved in. I'm done being the hero."

"It was your inaction that necessitated this Downfall to come to light, Mr. Potter," said Lucius.

"I expected that kind of statement to come from the mouth of Dumbledore and not a Slytherin, who really should no better," said Harry. "Besides, Downfall is just murdering Death Eaters and Ministry filth who contributed to the problem, so I have few problems with what this Downfall is doing. He has not targeted Hogwarts, should he, he'll be my responsibility but until then, I refuse to do anything."

"He may punish the guilty now, but the lines between innocent and guilty tend to be blurred in war," said Lucius. "Surely you don't wish for the blood to be on your hands, Mr. Potter?"

"The blood is on the hands of those who allowed rubbish like Voldemort to happen in the first place," said Harry and right now, he gave Dumbledore a knowing look. "Not my hands...I care but I don't care to the extent that I'm willing to do anything."

"Quite disappointing Potter, I had hoped that someone who had managed to survive the Dark Lord so many times would have a bit more of a backbone," responded Lucius and Harry just yawned at him.

"The Dark Lord can take care of the problem, he's the most feared Dark Lord in a century, he should be able to defeat Downfall if he's so great," said Harry. "The same thing I told Dumbledore about Voldemort, applies to Voldemort and Downfall. Tell your master that I'm done with him, I barely even spare his existence a thought any longer. He will fall to someone someday, I just hope there's a Wizarding World left when he falls. Until then, get out of my sight Lucius and never darken my castle again."

Lucius and his fellow Death Eater were banished from the wards without another thought.

"Back to dinner," said Harry to the others but Snape remained.

"Potter, we both know the only reason that you've declined to fight Downfall is that you are him and I will reveal it to the world, even if I have to track down Downfall and rip his mask off myself," said Snape.

"Do what you must Snape, but if you make Downfall a target, I believe he might find you first and given what we've heard, that's something you don't want to happen," said Harry.

"Are you threatening me, Potter?" asked Snape.

"Certainly not, Snape, but I'm not the one you need to worry about," said Harry as he walked with his friends, not even bothering to respond to Snape's ridiculous accusations any longer.

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A group of Death Eaters cackled at their fiendishly evil plans. They had commandeered a truck full with toys that were to go to a Muggle Orphanage. They had cursed all of the toys and planned on giving them to the children. There was no real reason they were doing this, unless one counted just being plain mean.

Then they would reveal the truth about Father Christmas to the children, thus ruining Christmas for all of the poor orphans.

"All the toys are cursed, get on your Muggle attire and we'll deliver them, those children won't have a very Merry Christmas," said one of the Death Eaters in an evil voice but a rather large box was rattling. "What's that?"

"Downfall man, it has to be, his in the box, I've heard the stories," said another Death Eater as he stepped back fearfully. "You don't know when he'll pop up and get you. He can come out of the closet at any time."

"Are you sure you're not thinking of Dumbledore?" asked the first Death Eater in a mocking voice but he quickly slashed towards the box. It broke open and revealed a doll.

"Mama," said the doll as the Death Eater picked up the doll. "Mama."

"Just afraid of a little doll, you pussy," said the Death Eater to his fellow Death Eaters as he threw the toy away in disgust as they turned around, but they saw the form of Downfall perched on top of his broomstick, wearing a Santa hat and carrying a big red sack.

"Ho, ho, ho, scumbags, Santa Downfall sees a bunch of little boys who have landed themselves on the naughty list," said Downfall before he cackled like a lunatic before he grew suddenly serious. "But don't fear, Downfall has something for you, let me just reach into my large sack."

The Death Eaters moved to attack, the fools, and Downfall withdrew his hands from the sack, before he threw white hot blasts of fire. One of the Death Eaters dodged, slipping on the ice and cracking his head open. Downfall cackled as he swerved around the air, dodging spells,

before he blasted flaming candy canes, impaling the Death Eaters. They shrieked as flaming jingle bells rained down.

“Oh you better watch out, you better bloody cry, you better beg for your life, because I’m telling you why, Downfall is coming to town!” sang Downfall as he watched with glee as one of the Death Eaters lit up like a Christmas tree before he spontaneously combusted. “He kills you when you’re sleeping, he kills you while you’re awake, he kills you whether you’re bad or good, so you’re fucked either way for goodness sakes!”

More Death Eaters burst into flames as Downfall cackled, before he threw several orbs of fire at the truck, causing it to blow up, taking the remaining Death Eaters out.

“Gory Christmas to all and all a good night!” cried Downfall.

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“More second string Death Eaters murdered,” said Lucius as he wondered if his time was running down. There were only twenty or so Death Eaters remaining, many of them with the exception of Lucius and Bellatrix quite useless.

“Most disappointing, Lucius, you’ve failed at many things, you’ve failed to persuade a naïve child to join forces with me to take down Downfall,” said Voldemort in a calm voice. “Lord Voldemort is sick of the excuses you bring me and your son, the fool, still has yet to accomplish his task. Therefore he will be called home when the Christmas holidays start, and he will be executed for his failure. Is that clear, Lucius?”

“Yes, my Lord,” said Lucius in a dismal voice, as he turned, he had lost money in both the destruction of Knockturn Alley and Azkaban, he had a great portion tied into both of those places.

“Downfall will meet his downfall, Bella, I’m tasking you with the responsibility of solving this problem once and for all,” said Voldemort, he hated to risk the only follower that he had that was nearly competent but he had few other options, other than of course fighting

the battle on his own and that breached many rules of Dark Lord etiquette.

“Of course my Lord, it will be an honor, Downfall won’t know what hit him,” said Bellatrix as she licked her lips in anticipation. “He’ll learn the meaning of fear.”

“We’ll see Bella, but don’t get over confident and once you have Downfall in a compromising position, finish the job, we can unmask the corpse later,” said Voldemort coldly as the few remaining Death Eaters looked at each other, none daring to say that there would be no mask if it was a demon. “It’s not a demon, I don’t care how much the Daily Prophet tries to shove that rubbish down your throats, Lord Voldemort says it’s just a powerful, but foolish, wizard and what Voldemort says is law. Now all of you lie low until Bella is able to draw Downfall.”

“How do you wish me to do that, my Lord?” asked Bellatrix.

“Be as creative as you want,” said Voldemort and Bellatrix looked pleased at that.

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Snape completed grading the Potions essays, they were rubbish but Potter would not override his wishes and change the grades, mostly to spite him. He looked up, he had been up for eighteen hours grading, before he would leave for the holidays. Snape was not one to take vacations, but the Headmaster insisted on it. Something about the time off doing Snape good, although he overheard the Headmaster mutter about delusions about Harry Potter. Snape was not being delusional, he knew Potter and Downfall was one in the same. The boy was arrogant, he had to be the center of attention, and this was a new inventive way to do so.

Snape moved over, but his door blew shut on its own accord. When he moved forward to open it, he was blasted backwards by a jolt of magic, his hands burned as he felt his wand being ripped from his hand and he was blasted against a wall. Snape struggled as he

attempted to pull himself free but there was some kind of magical force holding him in place.

"Hello, Snape, we meet at last," said Downfall as stepped from the shadows. "I would say it was a pleasure, but why lie. I understand you've been making some claims that you've planned to track me down. Well, here I am, much to your displeasure I'm certain."

"Drop the act, Potter," responded Snape and Downfall responded with laughter, before he grew serious.

"Listen, Snape, you may wish for me in the end, because I'm going to pry through your mind and find out why you had second thoughts after you revealed the prophecy to Voldemort, that is if you had any second thoughts and you're not playing Dumbledore for a fool as much as Voldemort is playing you for one," said Downfall as he grabbed Snape roughly by the head and began to force his way inside his mind.

"Potter, you couldn't shield your mind, what makes you think you can break through mine," said Snape but Snape suddenly felt his head splitting as Downfall pushed through his barriers. Snape tried to push back but Downfall pushed further. It was a battle of wills and Snape felt his defenses crack. He tried to push pointless memories forward, in an attempt to stall Downfall, but he felt his walls crumble like nothing.

"Pathetic Snape, much like you, I had hoped for a better fight than this," said Downfall as he continued to force his way, digging through Snape's memories, not caring how much damage you did. "Yes, Death Eater tortures, humiliating at the hands of the Marauders, always amusing, considering it's you, you deserved everything, you can bury that as far as you want Snape, you can...let's see...interesting...you were friends with Lily or more likely, that's what she allowed you to believe. She pitied you Snape, most likely, deluded to think anyone could befriend you because of your charming personality. Given that you stalked her when you were children...that's just disturbing and let's see...the prophecy....YOU GREASY SON OF A BITCH!"



That last statement did not come from Downfall but rather from Harry Potter, as his hands wrapped around the throat of Snape. Snape could barely breathe as Harry continued to choke him, all magic forgotten.

"It's your fault that Voldemort went after her, Dad, and me and you expected to be forgiven...just because you asked Voldemort to spare her, never mind that you took him at his word," said Harry as he ripped off the mask, revealing his face to Snape. Normally Snape would give a look of triumph but the look on Potter's face was horrifying, he had completely lost his mind. "You wanted to take advantage of her you bastard, her vulnerable state, no she would have seen right through you, she just pitied you, Mum was truly the best of us all, the only person worth a damn in this wretched world and your own idiotic action by revealing the Prophecy killed her. It's your fault Snape, I've always thought you were a worthless, petty human being but this is a new level of deplorable...LOOK AT ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU!"

Snape forced his eyes up. Potter did look like a particularly vengeful demon right at the moment, as he turned around, blasting several desks to the side, causing them to burst into flames. He turned, before he collapsed to the ground, putting his hands over his face as he shook madly.

"You won't ruin this, you won't soil her memory, you might have ruined my father by planting those memories last year, but you won't do this to me, Snape, you won't, you won't, she was perfect, the only good thing that I'm connected to, Mum why did you have to die. You're the hero, not me, I'm lucky, selfless you are, you died to protect me and your death was in vain, no one ever learns, Mum," said Harry as he rocked back and forth in a crazed manner. Snape attempted to piece together. There was some charm that Lily did to save Harry and Dumbledore had theorized that during that night, a piece of the Dark Lord had ended up in Potter. It was possible those two factors were combined, warping into Downfall. "Snape, you won't do this, you've gone to far, she was never your friend, never your friend, she pitied you, she would have never given you the time of day, besides you valued her friendship a lot didn't you. You called her a Mudblood, I hope you die. You son of a bitch, I hope you die. I hope

your organs burst and you're poisoned with your own blood. I hope you die you son of a bitch. You no good cockless motherfucker I hope you die. I hate you, die already, you killed Mum. She was never your friend. You were an obsessive lunatic. I hate you. She shouldn't have died, truly a flower in the toxic wasteland of this world. You'll all die, I'll kill you all, then I'll erase any trace of this world. When I'm done, when we're done, there will be no sign that the Wizarding World even existed. You ruined my life, I'll end yours."

Snape attempted to move but was still stuck. Harry still was rocking back and forth, half sobbing, half laughing like a mad man. His eyes were completely blood shot.

"She was an innocent, she died, I miss her, I never really got to know her, but she'd be ashamed of what this world turned into, her sacrifice amounting to nothing, Lily, you're the hero, Mum, you're the greatest, fuck the rest, including me, I'm a failure, a fuck up, it has to end, all will perish, erase it all, destruction is the only way to stop the poison," said Harry in a crazed manner before his expression turned to complete child like innocence as he turned to Snape. "Do you miss her, Snape?"

Snape was caught completely off guard.

"Snape, do you miss her?" asked Harry as a flaming dagger appeared in his hand. "Answer me before I gut you like a fish?"

"Yes, Potter," said Snape.

"WELL YOU DON'T DESERVE TO MISS HER!" shrieked Harry angrily. "YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO EVEN SPARE ONE MOMENT OF YOUR TIME THINKING ABOUT HER, OBSESSING WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE HAD! YOU WOULD HAVE NEVER HAD ANYTHING! YOU ARE NOTHING SNAPE!"

Harry collapsed to the great in a dead faint but Snape was not out of the woods as Harry moved just seconds later. His face was covered by the mask of Downfall.

“Well, there’s nothing more for me to add,” said Downfall casually before he waved at Snape, before shooting fire right at Snape’s head. The grease on Snape’s head caused his head to catch on fire rather quickly, but it rolled off, catching a nearby shelf on fire, with Downfall putting it out. The entire top half of Snape’s head was burned to a crisp and he was yelling in agonizing pain. “You know, that will kill you in due time, but why take any chances?”

With that two dozen flaming daggers appeared in mid air and they were propelled right at Snape, impaling several parts of his body. The daggers melted into his body and Snape was most certainly dead.

“Well that was more anticlimactic then I expected,” said Downfall in a bored tone of voice but he was slightly amused about Potter snapping long enough to override his control. “Now Snape’s done, time to eliminate the cause of the problem we in and watch the world destroy itself in the chaos.”

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Albus Dumbledore arrived at his office the next morning, as most of the school was cleared out for the Christmas Holidays, to find a message wrote on his wall, in blood.

Dumbledore,

I have Harry Potter but not for long. Come to the abandoned St. Brutus’s Secure Center for Incurably Criminal Boys by noon and surrender to me or Potter will die for your sins. Face your destiny. Bring any members of the Order and they will perish. It’s time for you to be held accountable for your actions, Dumbledore, time to face your Downfall.

Sincerely,

Downfall.

Dumbledore was caught off guard. The name struck familiar and it was used by Harry’s Muggle relatives as a cover story to tell the

neighbors and Vernon's sister where Harry had been during the year. It had been forced to relocate to another facility within the last year.

Still there was little time to waste, Dumbledore had about five hours to locate the center and diffuse any nasty surprises that Downfall had for him to deal with.

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Lord Voldemort looked at a small piece of parchment.

Voldemort,

I have Harry Potter but not for long. Come to the abandoned St. Brutus's Secure Center for Incurably Criminal Boys to fight me to the death by noon or you will never have the satisfaction of avenging your crushing defeat to Potter. Any Death Eaters you bring will die.

Sincerely,

Downfall.

Voldemort crushed the note in his hand. It was his right to destroy Potter, not that overhyped lunatic. Bellatrix had little luck in locating Downfall but he would bring her along as a decoy and distract Downfall.

Lord Voldemort would not fail.

Well that's the end of Chapter Seventeen. Next Chapter, it's Voldemort, it's Dumbledore, it's Bellatrix, and it's Downfall, squaring off against each other in what should amount to a chaotic free for all. Plus news of Harry's surprising "kidnapping" and Snape's grisly death spread through Hogwarts and the fallout from there, as many people react, some badly.

## Chapter Eighteen: Free For All.

"The Headmaster had informed me of a disturbing message, Miss Greengrass," said McGonagall as she had called Daphne off to the side during breakfast that morning, with Astoria, Luna, and Neville, all having stayed for the Christmas holidays, listening closely. They had already saw Snape dead in his office, many of the Slytherins panicked beyond belief. "There is no delicate way to put this, but Mr. Potter has been abducted and held captive..."

"HOW?" asked Daphne in a panicked voice before she grew a bit more dignified. "When could this have happened, Professor McGonagall? Hogwarts is a fortress, especially in Harry's hands, no one should have been able to touch him within the walls."

"All I know is that it occurred and the Headmaster has followed the kidnapper to the address indicated, and why the how is unknown, the who is obvious," said McGonagall before she quickly added. "Downfall, it was Downfall, whatever he is, its believed that he has captured Mr. Potter for reasons unknown. He has ordered that Dumbledore surrender to him or, as he put it, Mr. Potter will die for our sins."

Daphne just shrugged, she had no idea what that meant but the fact that Harry was missing. McGonagall moved off, to meet with the remaining staff. With both the Headmaster and the owner of Hogwarts gone, the entire school was in a state of confusion.

"Room of Requirement, five minutes," muttered Daphne to the others and they nodded, before she walked by and gave Ginny a nod at the Gryffindor table, before mouthing the same words out of the corner of her mouth. Ginny replied with a nod of understanding, before Daphne casually made her way forward, with the others following one at a time, trying not to attract too much attention. Perhaps they could figure out something but it was hopeless. Still they had to try.

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Dumbledore arrived outside of the old ruins of St. Brutus's Center for Incurably Criminal Children. He looked with a frown, he could not

imagine anyone sending their children here, no matter how bad they were, it looked to be a horrific place but Muggles tended to have a bit of a different perspective on the world than the Wizarding World. He pushed open the gate and walked around. He had no idea where Harry could be. Theories, many of them unlikely, some very likely, but nothing concrete to back up those theories.

Another pop echoed the arrival of Lord Voldemort and with him Bellatrix Lestrange and Klea Shae, neither looking too thrilled to be there. Voldemort looked up and backed up in surprise when he saw Albus Dumbledore standing there.

"Dumbledore, what are you doing here?" demanded Voldemort.

"I could ask the same question of you, Tom," said Dumbledore with a twinkle in his eye as Bellatrix flexed her fingers over her wand, looking as if she wanted to kill Dumbledore right then and there but Voldemort gave her a look of warning. "I received a message from the entity known as Downfall, saying that I should surrender to him or Harry would perish. "

"The same Dumbledore, although he challenged Lord Voldemort to a duel to the death and naturally I had to accept, otherwise I wouldn't have had the satisfaction of destroying Harry Potter with my own wand and that is something that Lord Voldemort could not have," said Voldemort.

"He lured both of you here with the promise of Harry Potter, it could very well be a trap," said Klea Shae. "It does sound like the set up for every other trap in history...."

"Silence, Klea Shae," warned Voldemort before he cleared his throat. "It does occur to Lord Voldemort that this little arranged meeting with Downfall could be a well orchestrated trap."

"Yes, the thought did cross my mind, Tom," agreed Dumbledore before he nodded. "But perhaps our combined forces might be enough to take Downfall off guard..."

"Fool, he's expecting both of us, there will be no off guard about it," said Voldemort.

"Perhaps, but I think he might have expected both of us to wipe each other out so he could pick up the pieces," said Dumbledore and Voldemort just answered with a grudging nod, he barely considered what Dumbledore was saying but he supposed there was some truth to it.

"That does seem like the most logical thing that would be done and there is nothing that suggests that Lord Voldemort should not eliminate you once and for all," said Voldemort in a calm voice as he looked at Dumbledore. "However, it would just waste my time and your remaining time as well. The clock is ticking with both of us and every second counts. Potter is of interest of both of us...for different reasons."

"I hate to do this Tom, but you do raise a point, we have to put our differences, as large as they may be aside, at least for the time being, whatever happens after Downfall is disabled and Harry is removed from his clutches, well, it will happen," responded Dumbledore in a calm voice.

"We both know how this will turn out, Dumbledore," replied Voldemort but he regarded the Headmaster. The moment that Downfall met his downfall, he would deal with Dumbledore and then Potter would meet his final defeat. "So, once this is over, nothing has changed."

"I'm afraid that will be the case, Tom," said Dumbledore sadly. "Although I do maintain hope it is never too late."

"That hope makes you a fool Dumbledore," responded Voldemort. "Lord Voldemort is merely disgusted that he is degraded himself in having to team up with you, but Lord Voldemort must accept that we will join forces, at least for the meantime."

"You can't be serious, my Lord, Albus Dumbledore represents everything that we're against, we might never have another chance to get him alone in public and kill him," said Bellatrix but Voldemort shot her a look that silenced her.

"Lord Voldemort knows what he's doing, Bella, in the end, Downfall will be finished," said Voldemort but there was laughter that echoed from miles around. "Downfall, show yourself."

"Why bother when you'll come to me?" asked Downfall. "You know the score, Potter will mean a grisly end in about three and a half hours. Dumbledore I want your unconditional surrender. Riddle, I want your head. Anyone with you, I'll just kill them and not bat an eyelash at doing so."

"How do we suppose we get inside?" muttered Bellatrix.

"The front door would be an excellent start you twit," responded Downfall as it swung open. "Good luck to all of you, you'll all need it."

"He's offering us the front door, so reason believes that we should head in through the back way," said Dumbledore.

"No you fool, he's swerving the swerve, expecting for us to go in the other way, which is the real place that is rigged to be a trap," said Voldemort as if this was the most painfully obvious thing in the world. "It is a brilliant plan, almost as brilliant as one concocted from Lord Voldemort."

"I believe you are mistaken Tom, the back way is the more intelligent way to take this, trust me, it will all work out," said Dumbledore.

"You dare question the wisdom of the Dark Lord?" asked Bellatrix in a crazed voice.

"You take your path Tom and I'll take mine and we may meet up indoors, if we whether what's waiting for us on the other side of the door," said Dumbledore and Voldemort turned, with a sneer on his face, as both of the powerful wizards going their way, with Bellatrix and Klea Shae following Voldemort and Dumbledore going on his own way, both wizards believing that they were right.



“Just one question?” asked Neville to the rests of the group. “Harry should have been save, we have never had any of the strange incidents that seem to be centered around him all year. In fact, the school has been mostly safe, but now he’s gone.”

“It makes about as little sense as life usually is,” said Luna in a sad voice. “I have faith in Harry but at the same time...”

“If this Downfall is a quarter as powerful as everyone thinks, Harry doesn’t have a hope of defeating him, much less surviving,” said Astoria but she was looking at something. “However, it doesn’t make sense. Harry shouldn’t have been captured. He’s just too good. Not perfect true, but he wouldn’t have been swiped out of his own castle just that easily. That part doesn’t make any sense at all, he would have raised some sort of alarm.”

“Knowing Harry, yes he would have,” agreed Ginny as she looked thoughtful. “No way he could have been kidnapped...unless...no you don’t supposed, it would be impossible, he seemed adamant that he was done, but supposed...yes it could be true...”

“Well do share with the rest of us,” prompted Neville but Daphne had a similar look on her face, one of sudden dawning realization. Something that she felt she should have suspected ages ago, just slapping her in the face, at a sudden realization.

“I’m guessing both of you have put something together on how this happened,” said Luna calmly and both of them nodded, almost awestruck, Ginny more so, although Daphne tried to maintain the illusion that this should not have been too much of a surprise.

“Or maybe who or what Downfall is?” asked Astoria.

“I guess you could say that but it does make sense,” said Daphne slowly. “The person underneath the mask is the only person who would be able to capture Harry Potter....”

“HARRY!” shouted the others in unison, it made sense but at the same time it made no sense at all.

"Wait a minute, if Harry was Downfall, wouldn't he have told us?" asked Luna and Daphne just laughed.

"You're assuming too much, Luna, really you are, it's not a matter of him telling us, but it's rather of a matter of him not accepting what he became, trying to rationalize it, who knows really, it doesn't really matter," said Daphne. "Anyone other than Harry under that mask and he would have never been kidnapped..."

"So he kidnapped himself," said Neville. "What sense does that make?"

"That I'm not sure of, it could be that Harry has just cracked underneath the pressure, which is no fault of his," said Daphne, adding this last part quietly but Ginny grew strangely quietly. "You obviously know something that none of us do, so spill it."

"Not so much direct knowledge, but something that Harry told me in passing after class a couple of weeks ago," said Ginny in a slow and deliberate manner as the others looked at her. "Harry told me and this is as close to a direct quote I can remember. He mentioned that it was a shame that Voldemort had gotten so far but it was out of his hands and he was washing them of the war. This was a couple of days after Downfall made his first appearance, when he made the comment "but even then a part of me won't give up the fight easily, there is still a part of me that obsesses about ending this war once and for all my any means necessary". At the time, I just brushed it off as Harry just venting his frustrations about everything but given what happened..."

"Makes perfect sense," supplied Luna.

"Exactly," said Ginny before she sighed and Daphne just sat down in a chair the room supplied. "You seem like you don't believe that Harry's doing this on his own free will."

"Maybe it's because I don't believe that, I believe Downfall is something that was created, almost of a second personality or whatever, to cope with Harry's crushing loss to You-Know-Who," said

Daphne as if trying to rationalize the defeat. "Harry has been acting less aggressive lately, more laid back, deliberate, and....a welcome change from a hot headed Gryffindor but still that pent up aggression had to go somewhere."

"So you're saying that Downfall was subconsciously created by Harry," said Luna. "Well we're going to have to help him."

"Help him, yes, lovely, help someone who kills first and asks questions never," said Ginny a bit sarcastically. "It pains me to say it, but Harry might have cracked this time and..."

"I think Harry might be asking for our help," said Neville evenly. "I mean, the hints were subtle, but it was almost like he was sabotaging Downfall but..."

"None of this makes any sense," said Daphne as she waved her hand, the entire mess was giving her a headache. "Harry is Downfall and nothing he's doing makes any sense. Senseless violence in fact, everything is erratic and just off."

"That's the thing, nothing does make sense," agreed Luna. "In fact it makes so little sense that it makes more sense than anything else in the world."

"Right," said Daphne crisply brushing this off. "Harry has a grand plan of some sort and this faked kidnapping seems a bit too stupid of a giveaway that he's Downfall not to be an elaborate set up. Dumbledore for one is too crafty not to put the pieces together, but whether he wants to or not is another matter entirely. The only way that we can deal with this is try and talk to him about it when he returns."

"If he returns," muttered Ginny and Daphne, as much as she hated to admit it, had to agree that it was highly possible that whatever Harry planned, he was not planning on returning. At least alive that is.

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“So far so good, my Lord,” said Bellatrix in an approving voice, as the group walked through the opened front door. “Dumbledore is a fool to question your judgment.”

“Dumbledore is a fool for many reasons, Bella,” said Voldemort who took a step gleefully forward, but suddenly the walls around them lit up. They blinked at an insane interval and in a flash, flaming metal spikes shot from the walls. Voldemort put up a shield spell, causing his followers to fend for themselves. Bellatrix blasted most of the spikes to bits rather easily and unfortunately, Klea Shae was lucky enough to only escape with a few scratches. “Mere parlor tricks Downfall, Lord Voldemort doesn’t fear you. Lord Voldemort fears no man, so why don’t you come out and fight me like a man.”

“Oh I’m a man Riddle, much more than a man as you’ll find out, I hold the keys to the destiny of the Wizarding World in my hands and I can destroy it as soon as I want, just because,” said Downfall as they walked into another room, but suddenly all the doors and the windows swung shut magically sealing them inside the room.

“Do you think that just sealing Lord Voldemort inside a room could defeat Lord Voldemort?” asked Voldemort.

“No of course not, but sealing Lord Voldemort and his little minions inside a room that is cursed to magically deconstruct particle by particle, crushing you to death when there’s technically no space available,” said Downfall’s voice with absolute glee. “And who says magic and physics can’t mix?”

As if on cue, the room began to decrease in size. Voldemort threw spells at the doors, the windows, anything, but it seemed to only accelerate the process. Klea Shae and Bellatrix had attempted to the same thing, but once again they were fools. As much as Voldemort hated to die in such a convoluted and unrealistic manner, there was something else that caused him to hate the situation he was put in. The fact that Dumbledore was right about something was something that really irritated Voldemort.

“My Lord, there is no way out!” shrieked Bellatrix in a crazed manner as it was beginning to get smaller and smaller. She was freaking out,

screaming and throwing spells. She pointed her wand at Klea Shae, even though it would not solve the situation she was in. "CRUCIO!"

Klea Shae screamed in agony, as Bellatrix tortured him but suddenly the room stopped shrinking before it returned to its normal size and the door opened and the laughter of Downfall echoed throughout the abandoned building.

"Fools, you really thought I would allow you to die this easily, no Riddle, you see, I enjoy toying with you, you're so amusing," said Downfall. "Much like many in this world, you take yourself too seriously, while I take nothing seriously. Beat me if you can Riddle, survive if I let you."

The door swung open allowing the group to respond. Klea Shae was magically dragged by Voldemort down the next corridor, with Bellatrix following, as she looked from side to side. Whatever plan Voldemort had, he would have to tweak as he went on. Downfall was not playing with a full deck of cards and appeared to be playing an elaborate string of mind games.

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Dumbledore arrived at the back entrance, having checked the side of the building for any traps. Having not found any, Dumbledore walked inside and the moment he stepped on the carpet, the floor dissolved into dust and Dumbledore felt. It only took a few seconds for Dumbledore to drop, and he landed on something soft.

Something soft that was beginning to strangle him to death.

"Devil's Snare, Dumbledore," said a sadistic voice as the vines wrapped around Dumbledore, beginning to choke him out. Dumbledore struggled, his wand had been ripped out of his grasp by one of the vines. This plant seemed a bit more sentient than the average Devil's Snare. "Come on Dumbledore, it likes the damp and dark, I daresay a first year could solve the problem quite easily."

"My wand," gasped Dumbledore, it was quite fortunately he had a spare, now only if he could reach it without the vines crushing him to

death. He could not make any sudden shifts of movement, it was a very complicated process to make three simple movements with his arm, but he reached around, before he removed the wand from his pocket. Blasts of fire caused the vines to retreat under ground, before Dumbledore collapsed, before making his way towards the open door.

“Bravo, Dumbledore, bravo, a spare wand, three out of five for that but I’m afraid I’m going to mark it down to a two and a half out of three, because you had your wand a fraction of an inch off,” stated Downfall.

“Where’s Harry?” demanded Dumbledore, as he just barely got the circulation back into his wand.

“My rules Dumbledore, unless of course you’re willing to admit that I’m the better wizard and my way of fighting this war is the only way it can be stopped,” responded Downfall.

“I refuse to think that cold blooded murder is the way to solve anything,” said Dumbledore. “I believe that there is always another way...”

“There is never another way, other than my way,” stated Downfall as he cackled madly. “Very well then, we’ll see how long it takes you before you break. Whether it be mentally or physically, well stay tuned boys and girls.”

Dumbledore had no choice but to walk forward. If he kept playing this sadistic and sick game that Downfall was playing with him, there was a chance that he was going to find Harry. That was providing that Harry was not already dead, but Dumbledore tried to reason that the Prophecy prevented that from happening. At least he hoped it did, but the thing about Prophecy was that they made little sense most of the time.

He entered a room with flying keys, eyes widened. The Devil’s Snare had been a tip off but it was amazing, his Philosopher Stone traps from all those years ago had been repeated. Dumbledore felt relieved, they were so simple that even an average first year could beat them and one average and two exceptional first years did. He walked over, seeing a broomstick against the wall. It was years since he got on

one but Dumbledore threw all caution to the wind before he blasted up. He squinted, looking for the key, and with luck, he found it within moments. Dumbledore swooped down, grabbing the key.

Seconds later, the keys around him glowed bright red, before they shot right towards Dumbledore. Dumbledore was caught off guard, as he had the key, but the others were swooping around him, like particularly vicious bird as the cackling of Downfall echoed throughout the entire chamber.

"I know you'd recognize your own traps, so I've added a few improvements," said Downfall as Dumbledore narrowly avoided getting impaled by the flaming razor sharp keys. "I do apologize about not acquiring a three headed dog with rabies but there never seems to be another time in the day to get these things done. Not only are these things on fire, but they're also been saturated in a slow acting poison. Now a couple of scratches shouldn't affect a wizard of your magnitude but when you have a dozen of those things hitting at you at once...well that can be a bit of a bitch."

Dumbledore had to concur as he dodged the razor sharp keys, that nearly took his head off. It was a miracle that he had been barely touched. In a panic, he blasted the keys but once they connected, they divided it several more keys, that appeared to be more sharp than the one's that came before them.

"Did I mention that they multiply when you try and blast them into pieces?" asked Downfall. "And who says math isn't fun?"

Dumbledore put up his strongest shield, while keeping his back against the wall. The keys bounced into the shield and the strain of holding it up was causing Dumbledore great pain, blues, and agony. He shifted the key into the lock and with a turn, he clicked the door open. Quicker than any man his age should have been able to manage, Dumbledore pushed the door open and slammed it shut, as the keys impaled into the door. With another step, Dumbledore slumped against the wall, clutching his chest, breathing heavily, as he tried to regain his composure.

"Calm down, Dumbledore, I don't want you to have a heart attack," said Downfall but then he paused. "Oh wait, yeah I do."

"I'll find a way to stop your plans Downfall, whatever they are," said Dumbledore but he was rather worse for wear.

"Forward, Dumbledore, to the next task," said Downfall and Dumbledore turned around, to see a chess board with several pieces on that. So far, so normal, but Downfall responded with loud laughter that echoed throughout the building. "You know, I've never really liked chess. Never really could get the hang of it but so I'll just have the chess pieces from both sides beat you senseless."

Suddenly the chess pieces came to life and turned, stalking Dumbledore in a menacing fashion, one of them lifting up its large stone arms and trying to smash down upon Dumbledore. It was just an act of faith that Dumbledore dodged when he did but he was knocked down to the ground. The chess pieces surrounded Dumbledore, with the intention of doing him great bodily harm.

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"I tire of these games, Downfall," said Voldemort and Bellatrix nodded by his side, her shoulder banged up but they still dragged Klea Shae down the hallway. "Give me Potter and I might make your death a bit less painful."

"Oh, that's an original threat," muttered Klea Shae sarcastically as blood splattered from his mouth. Even when he was banged up he still could not resist adding his two cents, but Bellatrix held the wand right to the head of Klea Shae.

"Potter is near, Riddle, very near, these traps I've put you through, I've only meant to toy with you," said Downfall. "As soon as I eliminate Dumbledore, I'll deal with you but perhaps you can reach Potter before I finish my game with the old man. Top of the stairs, he's tied to the highest point on the top of the building right now."

"How do I know this is true?" asked Voldemort.



“How do you know it’s a lie?” challenged Downfall. “The thing is you don’t and the only way you can find out is by going there but do hurry, the clock is ticking. I haven’t quite decided how I’m going to eliminate Potter once both of you fail but I can guarantee you it will involve blood and gore and won’t be done by you.”

“Forward, both of you,” said Voldemort in an agitated voice as they moved up to the stairs which about halfway up was devoid of any traps but they all stayed on their guard nevertheless.

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“So you’re telling me that not only has Harry Potter been kidnapped and held for ransom by some escaped lunatic, but now you’re informing me that the Hogwarts potion master was murdered by the same lunatic?” asked Scrimgeour as he rounded upon Tonks and Kingsley, who were nodding. “Dumbledore has gone one step too far with keeping the Ministry out of the loop, while I doubt that anything the magnitude of Umbridge needs to occur, something needs to be done...”

“Forgetting one thing is that Ministry control of Hogwarts is exactly what got us into this mess in the first place,” said Madam Bones evenly. “Now Hogwarts is basically a separate entity, with its own jurisdiction, under the rule of Mr. Potter. Like it or not, until this one incident, the students were much safer with Mr. Potter policing the wards, then they were with Albus Dumbledore.”

“Be that as it may, now that Potter’s captured, so Downfall has found a flaw that even he was not able to deal with,” said Scrimgeour roughly.

“I do wonder who sent that anonymous tip,” muttered Tonks. The other members of the Order had not known, at least herself and Kingsley had not that Harry was captured and Snape was murdered.

“Matters little, both of you are to come to Hogwarts so we can investigate this entire mess,” ordered Scrimgeour and Madam Bones nodded.

“The Wizengamot representatives are arriving, we’re going to have to decide whether or not to declare this matter a state of the emergency, with Hogwarts having been breached in such a matter,” said Madam Bones, as she looked over her shoulder. The Wizengamot representatives entered, many of them not too happy with having been called into work this close to the Christmas holidays. It was mandatory, even the department heads had been called into work to weight in on this very serious matter. Bones turned, Scrimgeour planned on putting his input on the session, once Hogwarts had been combed over with any leads. Unfortunately, due to not being informed promptly, the trail of evidence might have ran cold.

The Wizengamot representatives and department heads settled into the courtroom, unaware of the blinking red orbs stuck to the wall, blinking and counting down to their destruction. They were set to go off in approximately one hour, at exactly noon, and were magically shield from view.

The Ministry of Magic would meet the same fate that Azkaban and Knockturn Alley did before it with the most influential members of the government sealed inside.

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Dumbledore sent the chess piece blasting into dust. Several of the chest pieces were reduced to nothing, while Dumbledore managed to undo the transfiguration on the others. Still, he felt himself worn down.

“What’s the matter Dumbledore?” taunted Downfall. “I can do this all day, but you’ve got about one hour before your precious little Chosen one dies in a horrifically brutal manner.”

Dumbledore managed to eliminate the last of the obstacles before he collapsed on the chessboard. He wondered if it was really worth it, but this gave him the perfect opportunity to set Harry back into his destiny. The boy would be in Dumbledore’s debt and would have to honor the prophecy. Dumbledore staggered to his feet, knowing what came next, and by sheer force of will managed to stagger his way through the next door.

“Trolls,” muttered Dumbledore, as he saw a particularly large and ugly one facing him off. The beast swung the club with all of his might but Dumbledore blocked it with all of his, before pushing his adversary back. The troll looked around as he found his club reduced to mere toothpicks.

Unfortunately for Dumbledore, the troll decided to pick up a huge rock and attempt to smash Dumbledore’s death. Sadly, Dumbledore would not be done in by such a simple attempt of murder and weathered the storm, blocking the assault, pushing back with all of his might. The troll staggered, as the rock exploded, blinding him with a cloud of dust. Dumbledore summoned several of the chess pieces from the last room and smashed it into the troll. These blunt force traumas knocked the troll to the ground and Dumbledore slumped against the wall, breathing, before he looked up. He could hear the sound of applause, sarcastic applause, echoing throughout the chamber.

“Bravo Dumbledore, two and a half out of five for creative use of your surroundings,” said Downfall approvingly, before he added in a disapproving manner. “But I’m going to have to deduct a point because those robes are simply heinous. Did you dress yourself in the dark or something or maybe blindness goes along with senility? Oh well, one more Dumbledore and your path towards Harry Potter.”

Dumbledore staggered forward, his leg was cut badly. He could barely see through the haze of pain but black fire sprung up on both ends. He saw a table with seven bottles. Once again he wondered what sadistic pleasure Downfall had and he moved forward, reading the parchment that was short, sweet, and to the point.

They’re all poison, you twit. You lose.

“That’s right, Dumbledore, I’ve removed the most fatal flaw for your little Philosopher’s Stone obstacle course,” said Downfall. “So you have two choices on how you can die. Number one, you can drink one of the poisons, which should kill you instantly and painlessly. Number two, you can get burned to a crisp. Oh and don’t bother calling your buzzard, because if he flashes into the wards, he’ll experience a hundred burning days per minute, which answers the age old riddle, what could be enough to permanently kill a phoenix?”

"That's inhumane," managed Dumbledore who had no idea if such a curse existed but something told him that it was highly unlikely Downfall was bluffing.

"Yes, yes it is," agreed Downfall. "So what is it going to be, the poison or the fire? Choose wisely, or I'll choose for you."

Dumbledore remained silent which gave Downfall all of the incentive to start heating up the fire and closing the walls together. Immediately, Dumbledore made measures to defend himself.

"Oh a flame freezing charm, I'll give you credit there Dumbledore, you may be smarter than most of the other people in this flawed world I've had to kill," said Downfall. "Of course, that just means about as much as being the top student in the special class."

Downfall cackled at this and left Dumbledore to die. Dumbledore intensified the flame freezing charm but the battle was becoming one that the Hogwarts Headmaster was struggling to win. Perhaps time had passed him by but Dumbledore was not willing to quit just yet.

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"Lord Voldemort has reached the top!" shouted Voldemort in a joyous voice, but levitating an inch off the ground to avoid slipping on the ice and the snow. Bellatrix had the sense to charm the body of her shoes and Klea Shae kept slipping and falling on his face, much to the amusement of both of the others. "Okay, Potter, don't worry, Lord Voldemort is here to save you, so he can kill you himself!"

"Master, my Lord, I don't think Potter is here," said Bellatrix in an uncertain voice and sure enough there was no Harry Potter.

"He lied," hissed Voldemort angrily.

"Yes, a murderous crazed sociopath with a few screws loose lying to lure his enemy into a trap, perish the thought and now it's your turn to perish!" shouted Downfall as he dove down from out of nowhere, throwing fire but Voldemort was ready for this little attack, managing

to repel the fire back towards Downfall. He casually dodged and bounced into the air, before he reached into his robes, before he pulled a katana sword.

“Oh, come on, a katana, that is so....” Started Klea Shae but he never finished his sentence, on the account of getting decapitated. Blood splattered all over the snow and Bellatrix cheered with glee, but was hoisted off the ground and launched off of the building into oblivion. Bellatrix screamed, that was until her body smashed against the pavement, breaking every single bone in her body and puncturing her internal organs. Downfall swooped around and came face to face with Voldemort.

“And then there was one,” said Downfall in a serious voice, before both wizards blasted spells at each other. Both ricocheted off of each other, causing a massive explosion. Voldemort looked at Downfall, dodging several flaming spikes.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” shouted Voldemort angrily as the green light blasted towards the air, but Downfall looped from his broom on the air, causing the killing curse to flying into oblivion, before he bounced down, throwing a glass vial right towards Voldemort but Voldemort blasted it to nothing, putting a bubble headed charm around his head to shield himself from the vapor within.

“Riddle, this ends tonight, I’ll obliterate you, before I eliminate the greatest reason why the Wizarding World has been put in this state,” said Downfall as Voldemort threw more dark curses, expanding his magic to its greatest potential but Downfall dodged and avoided all of the attacks.

“Lord Voldemort will destroy you and rebuild from there,” responded Voldemort but Downfall swooped down and around as the fight raged on. “You will tell Voldemort who you are.”

“No, sorry, you do, but I’ll give you a hint,” said Downfall. “You killed my parents!”

“Could you please be more specific?” questioned Voldemort, as both wizards pushed each other to their fullest, but neither would back down.

“No sorry, if you think you can beat me, the mask comes off, but I doubt that will happen,” said Downfall, as Voldemort felt his wand arm dislocated by a blast of blue light. He switched arms and continued to fight, but so did Downfall. Several loud explosions echoed as neither stepped down from the fight.

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Dumbledore was in the room, the fire pressing on either side of his shield, sweat rolling down every inch of his body. He struggled, shaking like a madman before he was struck by what seemed like a brilliant idea in his dehydrated haze. If he intensified the flame freezing charm and launched himself through the fire, then perhaps most of the impact would have been avoided, so he was not burned to a crisp. It was a long shot, but this fire was charmed to not burned out until Dumbledore did by all indications and any shot was better than the alternative. Dumbledore summoned all the strength, a blue light engulfing him. This would either work, wouldn't work, or work, but lock Dumbledore in a state of stasis that he would never break out of it.

With a movement, Dumbledore launched himself right through the wall of fire. A slight stinging situation filled his body but for the most part, he was shielded from the worst of it. He managed to rise to his feet, struggling forward, seeing a door. It was a likely assumption that Downfall was on the other side and then he could get Harry. Dumbledore pushed the door opened and winced when he saw a really tall ladder. With a sigh, Dumbledore started to climb the ladder, rung by rung, his joints aching, but he had to climb this ladder for the greater good of the Wizarding World.

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“Give up you wretched worm,” hissed Voldemort angrily.

“Wretched worm?” mocked Downfall. “Is that really the best insult you can come with?”

“Perhaps Lord Voldemort will just allow the blood he spills from your body do the talking,” answered Voldemort with a pained hiss, but a loud bang echoed and there were several deep gashes over Voldemort’s body. Downfall looked only slightly fatigued. “I don’t care how much of your pathetic blood I have to spill, you will kneel down before Lord Voldemort. You will bow before your master. Lord Voldemort will control you...”

“Will Lord Voldemort stop talking in the third person so much?” asked Downfall as he dodged a bright purple light, before he knocked Voldemort back, but the next spell grazed his elbow. Most of the brunt was blocked but blood splattered, staining the snow with red. “You’ll pay for that Riddle.”

“Lord Voldemort doubts that very much,” stated Voldemort in a calm voice but his next spell was blocked and repelled back at him by a particularly powerful counter attack. “I’ll rip off that mask, whether or not your head is still attached to your body makes no difference to Lord Voldemort.”

Several flaming spikes erupted but Voldemort flicked his wrist, causing them to crumble to dust but Downfall swooped up suddenly before he came down, flaming swords appearing in both hands. He flung them right at Voldemort who dodged, the swords impaling into the building. Downfall shot up like a cork and sent more miniature fireballs which Voldemort extinguished with the greatest of ease. Downfall turned, before he flew in the opposite directions. A sneer appeared on the face of Lord Voldemort.

“Fool, Lord Voldemort is so powerful that he doesn’t need a broomstick to fly,” said Voldemort as he willed himself into the air, before he glided forward. Downfall stopped and looked at Voldemort flew at Downfall, giving an angry, primal scream.

“And people think my powers are inconceivable,” said Downfall calmly as he shook his head as Voldemort glided forward. “How

many virgins did you need to sacrifice to get the power to fly without a broom?"

"One hundred and seventeen but that's beside the point, Lord Voldemort will destroy you, you will bow before the Dark Lord, I WILL RULE YOU!" shouted Voldemort in an overly dramatic and quite over the top manner but Downfall just rolled his eyes.

"Oh and it reminds me, Merry Christmas, Tommy boy," said Downfall as he threw a present at Voldemort, who instinctively caught it, caught off guard by this random act of generosity. The package burst open causing several white orbs to rise up before they exploded right into large blasts of fire, causing Voldemort to be knocked out of air and come crashing down at a horrific speed.

"YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF LORD VOLDMEORT!" screamed Voldemort as he smashed right through the street below, causing several buildings to crumble to dust from the impact, further burying Voldemort in the rubble. Downfall snickered, before he flew up and perched himself back on the St. Brutus's building, consulting his watch in a bored manner before the door pushed open and Dumbledore staggered out.

"Well, I'll give you credit Dumbledore, you actually managed to escape my trap, but that's the last trap you'll ever escape," said Downfall as he threw a deadly organ explosion curse right towards Dumbledore's heart but Dumbledore blocked it. Both wizards threw spells that clashed together in the air like swords. Two more spells and neither budged the other against. Dumbledore was running on pure instinct and Downfall went over in his mind all of the ways he could have annihilated Dumbledore. All of them were rather glorious and it was hard to pick just one.

"I will stop you," rasped Dumbledore in a pained voice. "I have to..."

"You won't, it's partially your fault that I've created, if you had the guts to deal with Voldemort sooner, none of this would have happened," taunted Downfall as a sickly yellow jet of light caught Dumbledore partially. Dumbledore was being broken slowly, it was just a matter of finding the right combination of spells to finish him off once and for all.



Dumbledore was knocked backwards, just barely avoiding slipping off the edge of the building to his doom and Downfall threw a spiral of black light at Downfall, blocked by a solid stone shield. Dumbledore dropped to his hands and knees. "On your feet, Dumbledore, fight me you gutless son of a bitch, unless of course you're finally ready to admit that my way is better. My way is the only way."

Dumbledore threw a blinding white light, that managed to just catch Downfall off balance. He had to find Harry before time ran out. It was necessary for his plans. Dumbledore whipped his wand forward and Downfall was blasted off of the top of the building, flying towards another building. A flicker of his wand and the descent was slowed down.

"You'd wish you would have broken me into a million pieces," said Downfall but he was banished roughly against the wall. Several cables tied Downfall into place, as Dumbledore appeared right in front of him.

"Where is Harry?" asked Dumbledore.

"Around," said Downfall in an unhelpful voice as Dumbledore reached forward, preparing to remove the mask to see who was behind all of this nonsense but Downfall responded with loud laughter that caused Dumbledore to be taken aback.

"Mind I ask what you find so amusing about the situation you're in?" asked Dumbledore. "You'll be locked up in..."

"Azkaban?" asked Downfall mockingly. "Oh, right, I've already burned that building to the ground. What mystical magical prison are you going to send me to Dumbledore. You obviously won't kill me or you would have not bothered in just securing me."

Downfall continued his loud cackles and Dumbledore's blood ran cold.

"What did you do to Harry?" asked Dumbledore.

"Nothing, he's perfectly safe, safer than he would have been under your polluted influence, not that is saying much," said Downfall. "I'm

just thinking about the Incendio explosives that I placed in the Wizengamot courtroom because I had sent word that Harry Potter was kidnapped and Snape was murdered, knowing full well that the dunces in the Ministry would call a full Wizengamot session, to decide what to do. None of them can make a consensus but I think it's obvious that once those bombs explode at exactly five after noon, it will blow the Ministry straight to hell."

Dumbledore winced, Severus being killed was news to him but he had a far more pressing matter. Still five minutes after Noon, it was 11:54 right now, more than enough time to clear out the court room if he hurried and then he would deal with Downfall once he got back."

"Or maybe it was five till noon," corrected Downfall when Dumbledore was completely out of sight and Downfall snapped free from his restraints with the greatest of ease. "Now to destroy the single reason why the Wizarding World is the state it is."

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From the rubble, a pale hand broke through and the battered beaten form of Lord Voldemort pulled himself out of the abyss, a crazed look on his face. He turned, several bones of his body were broken but that was nothing compared what he planned to do to that upstart Downfall.

It would take more than dropping an entire city block on him to defeat the greatest dark wizard that ever lived.

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"I'm telling you Scrimgeour, Potter has warded the room so that no one but him can enter," said McGonagall in a heated manner, repeating this for what seemed like the fifth or sixth time.

"Well if the wards have not been dropped, that means Potter is still alive," said Kingsley and Scrimgeour nodded grudgingly. "In what state, that's another matter entirely..."

“He’s bait, he’s got to be, to get Dumbledore out in the open,” voiced Tonks and Scrimgeour responded with a stiff nod as they continued to look around.

“I’ve spoken with all of his friends, they know nothing about what happened to Harry and there was no alarm raised, which makes this rather peculiar,” said McGonagall and Scrimgeour agreed, he would have to classify that as peculiar. They had already inspected the Potions lab, other than some blood belonging to Snape and some broken furniture, everything was as it should have been. Hogwarts would be in a state of flux if the owner was not located and the Headmaster was out doing who knows what.

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Dumbledore arrived right outside the courtroom, with plenty of time to spare. He stood on his feet, preparing to sound the alarm, but at that moment, there was a loud humming sound from the courtroom and several surprised screams.

With that a flash of fire erupted from the Wizengamot and appeared to spread through the entire Ministry, burning everything in its path. It was only just barely that Dumbledore was able to get out of the way of the fire and out of the Ministry, but those inside were not as lucky.

There was nothing remaining of the Ministry of Magic and when Dumbledore had returned to where he had Downfall secured, he had already had disappeared and there was no trace of Harry either. Dumbledore could barely stand but he had to return to Hogwarts. There was no other recourse of action. It was clear now more than ever that Harry had never been put here, just bait by Downfall to lure both Dumbledore and Voldemort into their destruction.

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Hermione Granger sighed. She had stayed over the holidays, hoping to use it as an opportunity to mend the fences with Harry. There were things that both of them said that were out of line. Hermione grudgingly admitted she took her own frustrations and inability to perform wandless magic out on Harry. They had been conditioned for

the past five years that a wand was necessary to perform all magic and it was hard to undo it.

Now Harry was missing, kidnapped, by Downfall, something that Hermione feared might happen. Downfall only rose from the abyss because Harry had just given up on the Wizarding World. It was only a matter of time before Harry was targeted. Now he was gone and Hermione dreaded the fact that she would never clear the air with him. She wanted to go outside for a walk to clear her head, regardless of the cold breezes moving outside but she knew that would be forbidden under any circumstances, much less a day like this one. She walked forward, seeing Ginny sitting at the Gryffindor table. The girl had decided to stay at the last moment, most likely under the encouragement of her mother. She saw Neville and Luna off with the Greengrass girls looking distance, all of them. There were other students, but many were too terrified to do anything. Aurors had been stationed at Hogwarts, it was worse than anything that had happened over the past five years combined.

“Oh hello, Hermione,” said Ginny in an absent minded voice. “Well you know this is it, it’s over, the end...”

“It’s not that bad, Harry’s still alive as far as we know, Professor Dumbledore is looking for him he’ll..for better or for worse he’ll find a way to bring Harry back,” said Hermione who had the energy totally sapped out of her from this entire experience. She knew Ginny was worried about Harry, regardless of how wrong some of her reasons were.

“You think that Hermione, but this is one case where even you might not be able to find out all the answers in time,” said Ginny with an ironic grin, as the others walked over. “Remember only Harry could have broken through the wards on his room, or an exceptional wizard otherwise, perhaps a demon if you believe those rumors.”

“You know something about Harry, don’t you,” responded Hermione suddenly, as if something had smacked her in the face.

“It’s obvious she does, but whether or not she tells you is another matter entirely,” said Daphne in a calm voice. “Not really your

business, your opinion on how Harry was handling his life was made perfectly clear and if you're worried, fine, you were friends for five years. But don't think you can make assumptions when you don't know what's going on."

"Only Harry can break through the wards in his room, only Harry could break through the wards in his room, only Harry could break through the wards in his room," muttered Hermione as something horrifying dawned on her and she turned to Daphne with an accusing look on her face.

"This is not my fault Granger," said Daphne evasively but she had said enough to confirm Hermione's deepest darkest suspicions.

"Oh my God," breathed Hermione in a horrified manner.

"Our thoughts exactly when we came to what I assume is a similar conclusion," said Luna in an off handed voice.

"You better not even think about informing Scrimgeour," warned Daphne.

"Why are you still protecting him, he needs help," said Hermione stubbornly.

"For one, he's immune to any legal persecution due to that agreement that he tricked Fudge into signing under duress and there really isn't a place to put him anyway," said Astoria as she turned around. "Besides, who would go into a suicide mission to stop someone that powerful?"

"Okay Harry might be good but he's not invincible," said Hermione but the others just looked at her in a skeptical manner. "He's not, why are you looking at me like that?"

"Only one wizard can match him, because of his mastery of wandless magic," said Daphne and Hermione's eyes grew in shock. There only hope of stopping Harry rested in Lord Voldemort. This was the very definition of a no win situation. "And that's not the best option."

“You’re his girlfriend, can’t you talk some sense into him?” pleaded Hermione.

“Girlfriend, that’s a bit of a strong word, that would imply we have a committed and official relationship, besides that term is rather Muggle anyway,” said Daphne with disdain. “And talk some sense into him, surely you must be kidding. Talk some sense into a person who throws flaming spikes and kills people for looking at him cross. We’re close, closer than you and Harry have ever gotten, but it’s not like we’ve proclaimed our undying love to each other. “

“If you think you can talk some sense into Harry, why don’t you try it Hermione?” asked Neville.

“Oh, that’s reasonable, he won’t listen to me when he’s sane, how is he going to listen to me when he’s lost his mind,” said Hermione scornfully.

“It’s Dumbledore,” said Luna suddenly, pointing and they moved over to the window, where the other students gathered around, seeing the charred and battered form of the Hogwarts Headmaster moved forward, McGonagall, along with Scrimgeour and the Aurors moved out, to see Dumbledore stagger forward, nearly collapsing.

“What happened?” demanded Scrimgeour.

“Not now, can’t you see he needs medical attention?” snapped McGonagall and Scrimgeour just responded with a disbelieving look on his face, but Dumbledore waved his hand.

“Ministry destroyed, everyone inside killed, no chance, just barely escaped,” said Dumbledore as he attempted to struggle to breathe. He had seen better days in his life and it took Scrimgeour several seconds to register, before he threw his hands up. If most of the Ministry had been killed, with the Ministry building itself destroyed, this was one of the darkest days that the Wizarding World had ever seen.

“And what of Harry Potter?” asked Scrimgeour.

“Not there, Downfall has him elsewhere,” said Dumbledore as he slumped against the wall but those loud cackles echoed throughout the air. “He’s coming.”

“Inside quickly,” said Scrimgeour as he turned to his Aurors but Downfall swooped down on them, sending several flaming spikes, causing them to scatter.

“Ah, Dumbledore, I see managed to escape the flaming death trap I sent you to,” said Downfall as he spun around, before he pulled a small gift box out of his robes. “I gave Riddle his gift, but it occurs to me that I haven’t given you yours. Happy holidays, you manipulative twit!”

Downfall threw the box at Dumbledore, who in a lapse of judgment brought on by his extreme fatigue caught it and suddenly he felt the all too familiar pull of a Portkey.

“Such an epic failure that one,” said Downfall as the Aurors attempted to catch Downfall off guard but paid for it, getting blasted right to the ground with the greatest of ease.

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Dumbledore fell with a thump to the ground and looked up to see a couple dozen goblin warriors, pointing their razor sharp spears at his head and one of them jabbing his hand hard, causing his wand to fly out of it and a goblin stepped on it, smashing it in half.

“We have him at last,” said one of the goblins in glee as they forced Dumbledore to his feet and escorted him off to the Chamber of Pain.

This was not one of Albus Dumbledore’s better days.

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“Teachers, students, and guests of Hogwarts, let me spin you a tale of woe,” stated Downfall as he looked at all the adults outside, unable to defend themselves and the students were trapped inside the school for the time being. “One thousand years ago two witches and

two wizards founded this school, with the hopes that it would be a symbol for magical advancement. It became a symbol for something else. The disgusting cancer that has spread across the Wizarding World, that will has no cure and no redemption. Achievements were discouraged, because people were frightened in rocking the status quo. Minds that could have turned to progress instead turned to mayhem and destruction. People died, few of them innocent, but they died. The same thing happened over and over again, throughout the years, Lord Voldemort was not the first Dark Lord who rose to strike fear into the hearts of the fools who allowed someone like him to rise up in the first place. But he will be the last, because what better way to kill the cancer, then to destroy the host beyond all doubt."

Downfall flew around, almost as if he was pacing back and forth in a crazed manner, before he turned.

"Hogwarts, corrupted, it's become a house of lies, but the Founders in their wisdom left an out," said Downfall. "A way to overload the wards of Hogwarts, to keep it out of the hands of enemies should they fall. Now this was a controlled process, with fail safes included so only Hogwarts could be leveled with the massive magical explosion. But what happens when you remove those fail safes?"

Downfall turned, and looked around.

"Complete and utter destruction," said Downfall crisply. "Hogwarts goes up, everything gets wiped out. The magical outburst will cause a backlash that will in turn overload the magic around other historical landmarks and the backwash from those landmarks will affect others. It's like dominos, once one gets knocked down, the others are soon to follow."

"But those explosions, they will cause natural disasters, that can have the potential to wipe out every living thing on earth," argued McGonagall.

"Thanks for the exposition Professor and you're right, it will," agreed Downfall. "Mass chaos, anarchy, doomsday as we know it, the end of all existence will happen, it's the only way."



Downfall looked gleeful.

“Fires, floods, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes erupting, computers getting scrambled so bad that nuclear reactors are overloaded, and last, but certainly not least, massive static cling,” said Downfall. “The point is all these disasters happening simultaneously will cause the planet to crack open and everything to blow into a million pieces. The Wizarding World won’t be plagued by the cancer, hell there won’t even be a world period.”

Downfall paused as he looked around.

“Well now that I’ve described my plans in meticulous detail, it’s time to get down to business,” said Downfall, as he turned to no one in particular. “So ladies and gentlemen stay tuned for the end of the world right after a word from our sponsors.”

Chapter Eighteen is in the books, about time as well, it took much longer than I wanted to but it’s done. There were parts where I admit I wrote things that would amuse me and no one else, but you know what, if I’m not amused, then there’s no story.

Coming up in Chapter Nineteen, Lord Voldemort attempts to save the world from utter destruction so he can take it over, people die, and things get blown up. And then there’s one more chapter after that, which is just short and perhaps rather weird.

## Chapter Nineteen: The Ultimate Showdown

"Now it is time for your complete and utter annihilation!" cackled Downfall as he moved around, it would take mere moments to reconfigure the Hogwarts wards to his liking and then blow them straight to oblivion but as he flew towards the school to do the deed, he stopped, as if held back by some kind of invisible force.

"What in the hell do you think you're doing?" hissed Harry.

"Uh, blowing up the entire world, including this house of lies and deceit, the reason why it's in this sad state, Hogwarts," responded Downfall. "You didn't seem to mind when I blew up Knockturn Alley, Azkaban, or the Ministry of Magic."

"Well, I wasn't about to fight you on those battles, but you're not taking Hogwarts, Downfall," retorted Harry firmly which caused Downfall to respond with loud cackles.

"You don't get this, my will is stronger, I'm what you didn't have the guts to be, in fact I am you, a part of you that you're unwilling to admit exists," said Downfall as he swooped around, as the group began to look confused. They could not hear the argument because Downfall was so up in the air. "Dumbledore shoved me into the cage and I had to stand by, and watch you let the Dursleys push you around..."

"Dumbledore put limitations on me, there was no way I could fight back, even though there were times where I wished I could transfigure them into something hideous," argued Harry.

"Details, details, you've always been weak Harry, it's a fault of yours that's glaring, you should have ripped out Umbridge's throat last year, but you took her detentions," said Downfall. "You allowed Snape to bully you around and not only that rape your mind. You should have drowned him in a vat of his own hair grease. You are the most powerful wizard in the world, yet you've squandered it by locking yourself inside a school. I had to take charge, you fought but I won and this is the end result. The final curtain is dropped on the world."

“What will destroying the world possibly accomplish?” asked Harry.

“There’s the great thing, it doesn’t accomplish a bloody thing,” answered Downfall happily. “It’s the ultimate murder-suicide. I blow up Hogwarts, everything else goes to hell, I get wiped out in the end but the thing is, Lord Voldemort gets blasted straight into oblivion as well. We won’t need to worry about defeating Voldemort, because the complete and utter destruction of the world will do it for us.”

“I vowed to protect Hogwarts and now you’re threatening it, I won’t allow you to do this to my school,” muttered Harry, but Downfall’s laughter could be heard within his head as he swooped around. Try as he might, Harry could not gain control of the situation. He pushed himself to concentrate, somehow blocking Downfall from his mind. Downfall continued to laugh madly, as he swooped around.

“You have no control Potter, see I could smash both of us into bits if I wanted to,” said Downfall as he swerved at the last second, before Harry smashed into the castle and he turned around.

“But you need my control of Hogwarts to overload the wards,” muttered Harry with disdain but he continued waging a mental battle. The thing is, while he finally came to the realization that Downfall was a part of his mind, finding which part and using Occlumency to shut it off from the rest of his mind, which he was certain still was sane.

“Now, Harry, we’re going to take a trip and remove the safeguards, before it’s the end of the world as we know it and no one will be feeling fine when I’m done with them,” responded Downfall as he cackled.

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“He’s right, he sealed us inside,” said Neville in desperately, as he turned to the others. Daphne and Astoria seemed to be remain a façade of calmness, Astoria more so. Ginny was rocking back and forth, Hermione bit her lip in frustration, and Luna was looking strangely serious and sane.

“So this is it, the end,” said Hermione. “It’s the end, I can’t believe Harry would do this to us, even after his change of attitude.”

“Harry wouldn’t do it to us, but Downfall would,” responded Daphne as if this answered everything and Hermione looked at her with a skeptical look.

“You talk as if they’re two separate people,” said Hermione.

“Because they are,” argued Daphne calmly.

“And that’s not as far fetched as you would think, Hermione,” said Luna quietly as she cut off Hermione and Ginny saw what Luna did as well.

“It’s almost like he’s arguing with himself up there,” commented Astoria lightly, as if people losing their sanity was a daily occurrence.

“This is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever seen,” said Hermione in an agitated voice but at the same time, she looked on anxiously, as there appeared to be some sort of battle. “We do have to help him, somehow.”

“There’s just one problem, considering the fact that his insane half has sealed us inside the school, that might be a little difficult,” said Daphne as she rolled her eyes, but she watched closely, as the figure on the broomstick made their way. The other students in the school were so terrified that they paid little to no attention to the conversation or the actions of the group. “If I’m not mistaken, Harry mentioned once that the wards can only be modified from inside the school.”

“But did he mention where?” asked Ginny and Daphne shook her head.

“What about that overload the wards thing that Harry was talking about?” asked Neville and Daphne just responded with a shrug.

“Couldn’t tell you,” said Daphne and she looked at Hermione.

"I've never seen it mentioned once in Hogwarts: A History," responded Hermione.

"Which proves how useless that book is, it doesn't even mention ten percent of Hogwarts history and what it does mention is a Ministry approved account of things," responded Daphne.

"No time to worry about that now, if we pay attention, we might figure out where Harry is heading," said Ginny quickly but suddenly the figure of Downfall dove right into the icy cold lakes, laughing badly.

"Well that's just perfect, now we'll never find him," remarked Astoria but suddenly, a loud explosion echoed from elsewhere in the school, causing everyone to panic. Daphne turned, listening intently, it was very difficult to learn where it was coming from but Harry had simply arrived inside the school. A crash of several vases echoed and mad laughter, which Daphne slipped to the side, the others following at a safe distance.

"There's a small chance to find him, just follow the sound of the chaos and maniacal laughter," muttered Daphne under her breath, as the group moved down the hallway. Several more loud crashes echoed throughout the entire school, but most were too paralyzed with fear to do anything.

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"Was it necessary to enter the school through the ice cold lake?" asked Harry weakly, as he shivered.

"No," responded Downfall callously. "But it was in fact funny. Now let's see, those fail safes should be around here somewhere...I've always hated that vase, so ugly."

A vase crashed as Downfall made his way to a pair of stone doors. Once again, Harry tried to struggle, but Downfall responded with taunting laughter. There appeared to be no way out and Harry continued to struggle against the grip that Downfall had on him. He had tried to ignore Downfall's existence for so long that whatever had caused this thing to rise up, had taken control of Harry.

"Don't even bother to say that I won't get away with this, because I will," responded Downfall in a serious tone of voice, as the stone doors were at the end of the hallway. "Besides, using that line will make Klea Shae roll over in his grave."

Downfall cackled as he made his way forward.

"Harry, don't do it!" shouted Daphne in an urgent manner and Downfall paused, his hands were on the door. He was caught off guard temporarily and Harry used this opportunity to take control. Downfall was something that he could beat. He just stopped and turned, fists clutched to the broomstick. "It's not worth it, whatever happened, I'll be the first to admit the Wizarding World is corrupted beyond belief and believe me, I sympathize, but what about the few that have not been tainted?"

"Hogwarts, I can't destroy Hogwarts, I won't let Downfall have it..." started Harry but the loud cackles of Downfall were trying to break through, clawing against Harry's subconscious, the sadistic twisted piece of his psyche was edging to break out. "Out of here, all of you, I don't know how long I can hold any of them back, I'm going to try to open Hogwarts, I need you to get out of here, as far as you can, get everyone out of here, I can end this right now."

"Harry, you need our help whether you want to admit it or not!" shouted Hermione but that was the wrong thing for Hermione to say, especially at this particular time. Daphne sighed, she was so close to getting Harry to snap out, but Hermione just had to open her mouth.

"Once again, Hermione Granger, bearer of all knowledge tells me what I need to know, but don't worry, you insufferable little know it all, you're only a small fraction of what's wrong with this world, I blame myself, I should have never saved you from that troll during our first year, I would have saved a lot of grief," said Harry, but his voice was breaking in and out, something had pushed him to say this and he had not completely thrown off the influence of Downfall. "No, Hermione, get away, you're meddling in something...away...AWAY DAMNIT!"

A fireball blasted right towards Hermione, who shrieked as the sleeve of her robe was set on fire. It was only due to quick thinking that she was able to douse the fire. It was a warning shot and Harry turned around, a crazed expression flickering from his eyes. The group weighed their options, any second now, it was highly likely that Downfall could fry them all to a crisp.

"You know Harry, I thought you were less pathetic than this," said Daphne and the eyes of both Hermione and Ginny widened in shock, and even Astoria, Luna, and Neville wondered if Daphne was pushing it just a bit much causing the crazed sociopath out of his mind. "Some people call you the greatest wizard of our generation and maybe that's true to some point but I see something else. I see someone who has cracked under the pressure. It's a shame really, I expected better of you, and for a while, I've got better. You know, I really supported your decision to just quit while you're alive, but the way you're trying to cope with this, well it leaves something to desire."

"Daphne, shut up," muttered Astoria out of the side of her mouth anxiously, as she saw miniature fireballs appearing on the tips of Downfall's fingers, or Harry's fingers, or whoever that was supposed to be at the moment. The fact that the fireballs continue to grow and shrink at will, with the heat intensifying and cooling off signaled some kind of internal battle.

"Yes, Harry, I really thought we broke you of this Gryffindor stupidity, but it's returned stronger than ever, even if it a slightly different form," commented Daphne abrasively and Harry clenched his fists, blocking out the pain of the fire trying to push from them, from the wandless magic erupting from his hands.

"She tried to break you of it, what does she think you are, a dog?" asked Downfall. "Just like the others, think you should jump when they say jump, beg when they say beg, save the world when they say save the world. Besides it's not like she gives a damn about you anyway."

"Of course she does," muttered Harry weakly.

"Slytherin, Potter, she sensed an opportunity given her father's poor management of his finances and your situation presented an opportunity for her to get close to someone who could support her," jeered Downfall, as Harry looked at Daphne, who could not hear this conversation. "Look at her, taunting you about your ignorance, as if any of that is your fault. It's a product of a fractured world, a world that you have to destroy before it destroys itself. Consider it a mercy killing, destroy it all, start over in the next great adventure as Dumbledore once called it."

"Harry, listen, you might be many things, but you've never taken the easy way out," said Ginny suddenly, realizing that either Daphne or Hermione would say something that would cause Harry to crack into full Downfall mode.

"Easy way out maybe, but I have to do this, I have to destroy the world, the only thing I have to do, it has to be done, it's out of love for a world that hasn't loved me back, it's mocked me with it's cruel indifference, never to know the joys of living a normal life, having a normal family, not having everyone gawk at your forehead, and having a crazed lunatic who has a habit of speaking in the third person after me, none of you don't know how life has mocked me, I have to destroy it all, it must be done, I'm sorry, it's for...the greater good," said Harry in a crazed manner, rocking back and forth on his broomstick, as fireballs rose from his fingertips. "The end has come for all, anarchy, complete chaos, the world continues to mock me."

"Don't do this, it isn't worth it," said Daphne in a commanding voice.

"Of course it's worth it, the world has wronged me for the last time, you don't want to know what I found out from Snape's mind before I killed him," said Harry as his voice echoed. Several loud shouts of "STUPEFY" broke his crazed rambling but a shield appeared around Harry, causing the spells to bounce back at their casters at full power, knocking them completely unconscious. "I really wish you hadn't have done that. My friends would understand but the thing is, I've never had any friends. You might have done things in my best interests at times and there were some good times, but by raising your wands at me, you've just proven. I'm sorry though that it couldn't have been different. I really am but Dumbledore, the Dursleys, and others made



sure that I could never properly care for anyone. It has to end right now, you win Downfall but it's not completely bad. They took Mum away from me, the only innocent person I've ever been connected with, but perhaps it was for the best. Still not going to stop me from destroying the world, I lose Mum, the entire planet loses its state of existence, it all balances out in the end."

Harry raised his hands, creating a barrier, just as the flames erupted from his hands. The flames bounced off the barrier.

"Protecting them to the last, Potter, you really are playing the hero," taunted Downfall. "Matters little, they're die with the rest, now let's remove those safeguards. No one can stop us now, we will purge the cancer for the world."

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A battered but still alive Lord Voldemort soured through the air, with great anger. Downfall had not only made a mockery out of him, but the crazed vigilante also destroyed the Ministry of Magic. Voldemort was enraged about this, not because he cared for the Ministry, but that was something that he always wanted to do, but never had a slow day to pull it off. He continued to move forward, as he caught the Wizarding Wireless, who managed to get in a report that Downfall was going to blow up Hogwarts and thus cause a chain reaction of disasters that would destroy the world. This caused Voldemort to hasten his pace. The world being destroyed was not in his best interests. What was no longer there, could not be taken over and Voldemort would not be denied. His followers had been wiped out but they were imbeciles anyway.

"DOWNFALL!" bellowed Voldemort as he glided over the gates of Hogwarts, looking up. "Come and face Lord Voldemort like a man or I will slaughter each and every person inside this castle."

"That threat only works on someone who gives a damn, Tommy Boy!" cackled Downfall in an insane manner. "But if it's a whooping you want, one would think that you had enough after I dropped an entire city block on you. So Riddle, do you think you can defeat me?"

"I'll destroy you, Lord Voldemort will make you regret your disrespect!" shouted Voldemort dramatically and suddenly, Downfall blasted forward on his broomstick, cackling like he was completely out of his mind. Voldemort slashed his wand towards Downfall but Downfall blocked, repelling the spell back at Voldemort. Voldemort did a somersault in mid air to block. Downfall raised his hand before he slashed it, sending a large flaming wall of fire. Voldemort countered by creating a shield of ice that absorbed most of the impact. Both wizards went face to face, with spells blasting and connecting with each other in mid air. They ricocheted off of each other, before they exploded, and Downfall swooped in the air, before punching Voldemort right in the face, knocking him out of mid air. Voldemort bounced back up immediately, with a burn mark on his face. He would not be caught off guard by such a pathetic and Muggle way of offense. Two spells clashed together like swords.

"What's the matter Riddle, getting tired?" taunting Downfall as the flaming daggers erupted from mid air but Voldemort blocked the assault. The daggers crumbled into dust and Voldemort sent a jet of black light. Avoided once again as he glided in mid air, a sickly yellow light blocked before Downfall blasted a ball of fire forward. Voldemort shrieked as the skin was burned. Despite the second and third degree burns suffered, Lord Voldemort refused to let this upstart defeat him and he moved forward, dodging the attack. He jabbed his wand forward, but Downfall repelled the spell back at him. Voldemort swerved around, nearly losing his balance, before he managed to regain his balance and turn in mid air. Several bolts of blue light appeared to erupt from Downfall's gloves but Voldemort dodged and pivoted around, before he was knocked loopy once again. Several flaming daggers again, but Voldemort dodged that one.

"You've got better tricks than that, Downfall?" taunted Voldemort. "Lord Voldemort never thought he would sound like Klea Shae but do try something original but..."

Two gold blasts of light blasted Voldemort right in the chest, causing the Dark Lord to spiral into the castle wall. Voldemort put the breaks on, as Downfall dove at him, attempting to impale Voldemort on the end of his broomstick but Voldemort twisted into a puff of smoke, before he disappeared into mid air. Voldemort came from behind,

sending a sickly yellow light towards Downfall but it was blocked. Downfall clapped his hand and a cyclone of silver light erupted from it but Voldemort blocked that and he launched himself forward. A burst of fire was avoided, with Voldemort grabbing onto Downfall's head, but the Dark Lord found himself knocked out of orbit, Downfall's mask ripping off in his hands. Voldemort landed feet first on the ground and looked up, his narrow eyes widening in realization when he saw the face behind the mask of Downfall.

Harry Potter circled around the air, laughing like a crazed lunatic, unmasked but still dressed in the Downfall costume, before he turned and sent a blast of green fire towards Voldemort.

"Potter!" stated a shell shocked Voldemort as he blocked the fire and the trapped teachers and Aurors had similar expressions. A few students inside the school fainted, as they saw the completely insane and completely bent look. His face twisted into a smile, his eyes looked hallowed and he was not blinking, before he dove right towards Voldemort. Voldemort blocked the attack, before he was hoisted up into the air. Voldemort broke the spell, causing Harry to spiral around.

"That's right Riddle, you've unmasked me, pat yourself on the back, before I knock you on it," said Harry as he raised his hands, with several loud cracks and bolts of fire erupted from them. "I have more power than you can handle here. I'm at Hogwarts and here, I rule. I've embraced it, I will utterly defeat you Riddle and then the world will end. All this could have been avoided if you hadn't been a paranoid kook and not killed my mother based on a prophecy you heard!"

"Potter, Lord Voldemort will crush you, no Dumbledore to save you now!" shouted Voldemort as he rose up but Harry avoided the attacks.

"Dumbledore is doing the hardest of hard times with the goblins, I hope I've bought them enough time to make him suffer just as I suffered at the hands of the Dursleys," said Harry as he focused on Voldemort, crazed and haunted look on his eyes. "This entire world drove me to the breaking point, but I lost you to Riddle. I lost and I can't accept that. I've always been a bit of a sore loser deep down.

Kill me Riddle, if you ever want a chance in putting this world under your control.”

A Killing Curse was dodged with the greatest of ease. Voldemort prepared to make arrangements to bring the fight to the ground, there was no way he could defeat Potter in the air, insane or not, he was still a natural,

“Come down and fight me like a wizard Potter!” cried Voldemort in an overly dramatic voice.

“Won’t!” said Harry in a childish voice. “I prefer to fight you up here, like a winner.”

“I’ll cut you out of the sky for this you meddlesome brat!” shouted Voldemort as he sent two black bolts of light in the air, but they were swerved and Harry blasted Voldemort back with a white hot flame. Voldemort fought on, but a blunt magical force cracked Voldemort right on the top of the head. Another one was pushing Voldemort down to the ground. Voldemort grabbed his wand, fighting with every bit but Potter appeared to be drawing on some type of unknown magic that was making his assault even more powerful than ever.

“I’ll flatten you like a pancake, Riddle!” taunted Harry as he cackled with Voldemort struggling but losing the battle. The magic was exhibiting a strong force that threatened to crush Voldemort into a two dimensional figure. The magic continued to push, as Voldemort felt his muscles ripping, straining, his bones cracking, as he was flattened into two dimensions but then Harry released the charm, before he threw his head back and laughed like a mad man, eyes widened as he rocked back and forth on his broomstick. He had completely lost it. “I just realized something funny Riddle...something really amusing...we really fucked up the world for it to come to this. It has occurred to me...man this is really amusing, I love it, this is so totally wicked, you’re going to love this one.”

Harry took a deep breath, cackling like a crazed hyena. His eyes were unmoving not blinking as Voldemort was still injured from the assault.

"You see, you're the only hope that the world has against total and utter annihilation, we've flipped the script more or less, man this is so fucked up, it's great, genius, this is so totally original, Klea Shae would approve, I mean no one has ever done this, at least no one to my knowledge," babbled Harry. "I mean, you're the good guy and I'm the bad guy. I mean, this is so great and new. It's completely out there but in some insane and cracked way it works. So Riddle, hero, I'm going to wipe you off the face of the planet. Then I will wipe out the face of the planet! My superbly brilliant plan is bound to be a one hundred percent success."

Voldemort looked up dazed. He had to admit that Potter had the "villain evil monologue when he should really be killing the hero" part down nicely. Not that Voldemort would bother giving him the benefit of his experience, as this was a perfect chance to kill Potter and reclaim his roll as the Dark Lord.

"So, Riddle, any last words before...." Stated Harry but he was cut off when a blinding white light caught him right in the air, knocking him back. He screamed in pain as Voldemort struggled to his feet. "YOU SON OF A BITCH! YOU INTERRUPTED ME IN THE MIDDLE OF AN EVIL MONOLOGUE! YOU NO GOOD SNAKE FACED BASTARD!"

Voldemort threw another spell that knocked Harry backwards. He really wished he had his sound device apparatus with him, because that was worthy of the child cheering. Another blast but Harry swerved around, unfortunately, Voldemort yanked his broomstick out from underneath him. Harry landed on the ground, throwing fire at Voldemort, who saw this coming immediately, before he whipped his hand, causing Harry to fly into the air. Voldemort jerked his wand with his hand and caused Harry to smash up against the castle wall. Making a twisting motion with his hand, Voldemort gave his own evil laughter as he sent a vicious dark curse at Harry, holding it on.

"This curse will literally rip you apart, Potter," hissed Voldemort in Parseltongue as Harry struggled against the pain of the curse. Fireballs appeared on his fingertips as he tried to get aim but he felt the curse trying to rip his body in a dozen different directions. Fire blasted right towards Voldemort, catching him off guard, before a

white blast of light fired right towards Voldemort. Voldemort was caught right in the chest, before he was hoisted off the ground. Struggling, Voldemort cursed in Parseltongue as he found himself levitated up into the air.

Harry was in immense pain but somehow he drew power from the school itself, as the Emperor he could do this and Voldemort moved higher and higher in the air, before an orb of magical energy engulfed him as it erupted in several different directions.

"Bye, Voldemort," said Harry with a wave before Voldemort shrieked as he was shot up into space.

"You won't win Potter, you haven't seen the last of Lord Voldemort!" shouted Voldemort angrily as he continued to shoot up into the sky, with no signs of stopping. "Lord Voldemort will return, you'll see...."

Lord Voldemort never finished his threats, before he reached orbit, his body bursting into flames as he entered the vacuum of space. There was no noise as Voldemort's ashes began to drift throughout space.

"I don't think he's coming back," said Harry to his captive victims, who gave pleas that he quickly silenced. "Yes, I know, you don't want to die but the thing is, I really don't give a damn. A bit of me might, but let's face it, nothing that really matters but what I want. Now to end this entire thing with a bang."

Harry walked over, preparing to overload the wards of Hogwarts but he was struck down to his knees by an unseen force. Everyone had been captured, disarmed, locked inside the school, or shot into space, so Harry had no idea. He felt his head splitting in absolute agony, as there appeared to be some kind of force tearing him in two. Not necessarily half because the parts ripping away were far from equal. Voldemort's curse had still lingered even after Voldemort had been blasted into space. Harry gave a pained spasm before his body violently rejected something and he rose to his feet, stronger than ever before.

In fact, he had never looked better in his life. He had a toned, tanned body, with straight black hair, and dazzling green eyes, looking tall and imposing, not like a scrawny weakling ever. He just shrugged, far be it for him to make sense out of something as nonsensical as magic.

“Okay, time to say farewell to the world, because everyone will be dead!” cried Harry in an overly dramatic manner. “Who would even dare to stop me? I’ve defeated every single challenge that’s gotten in my way. Voldemort, the Ministry, Dumbledore, every single bloody Death Eater, sure I cheated, but what matters is I won. I’ve proven that I can match every single witch and wizard on this planet. My wandless magical skills are without peer. I can control fire in ways that no one could even dream. I AM A FUCKING GOD! So once again, there is no hope. I mean, who can stop me?”

“I can, Downfall,” stated a weak voice and Harry turned to see another version of himself. Only this Harry Potter was rather unremarkable. He had an average build, pale as a ghost, his eyes were a dull green, his hair was dry and devoid of any life. He looked like the least threatening thing on the planet but he looked at his crazed counterpart with a look of determination.

“You?” asked Downfall before he broke into out insane laughter. He had completely lost control of himself, where Harry managed to stand straight, despite the fact that it looked like he could be knocked over with a feather. “Ah yes, the part of me who still cares. The part of me who lingers on with hope that he can have a loving normal life in the end, the part of me who thinks that there is a world worth fighting for out there. The naïve little twit who has held me back from achieving my full potential. That was the rubbish that my body violently rejected. Why am I not surprised?”

“I’ve done the impossible before Downfall and I can do it again,” stated Harry in a firm voice, as he picked up Voldemort’s wand.

“You’re serious right?” asked Downfall. “No wait, that’s the mutt that you got killed due to your own stupidity. Seriously, Potter, I’m telling you this as a friend, don’t force me to kill you personally. Just sit back and enjoy the end of the world. Because it will be quicker that way. If I have to put you down, it will be slow and drawn out. I like making my

victims suffer. Think you can beat me, Harry? I'm not a troll, a Basilisk, a hundred Dementors, a dragon, or even a crazed madman who refers to himself constantly in the third person. Those pale into comparison to the fear I can bring upon people. I'm the thing that the Boogeyman checks his closet for before going to bed at night."

Downfall looked at Harry, but he stood there, pointing his wand.

"What's the worse that you can do to me that's not already been done?" asked Harry.

"That sounds like a challenge, but fine, you've brought it onto yourself, you may have bought the world a couple more minutes, before I wipe you out, which judging by your pathetic appearance, shouldn't be too much time," said Downfall as he turned his back on Harry. "I'll give you the first shot!"

Harry clenched his fist around Voldemort's wand and took aim but Downfall turned around and flattened Harry right to his back with one banishing charm, striking him point blank in the chest.

"Well, that was fun," said Downfall as he looked at the motionless form of Harry. "Now where was I, oh yes, the end of the world."

Downfall turned but suddenly he heard a noise as Harry got back to his feet. His legs looked like it could barely support him and blood dripped from his mouth.

"I thought you wanted a challenge!" taunted Harry. "Hit me with your best shot you gutless son of a bitch. I can take anything you can dish out!"

"Foolish Gryffindor pride," grumbled Downfall as the two wizards circled each other, as the fight was to begin.

One final chapter, with the fate of the Wizarding World and in fact the entire world in general hanging in the balance.



## Chapter Twenty: The Final Curtain:

Downfall made the first shot but Harry just barely found a way to avoid the attack. A loud explosion blew a large chunk of the ground where Harry had stood up into the air. Harry threw two spells but Downfall easily deflected them, before a cyclone of silver light struck Harry right in the chest. Harry struggled against the attack, before he was launched backwards with ease. Downfall slashed his wand but Harry managed to levitate a rock, blocking the attack. A whip of the wand and a loud crack, before Harry was knocked backwards once again, before a second blast of magic knocked Harry flat on his back. He felt his fingers growing slightly numb, but Downfall ripped him to his feet, before he launched Harry into the air and it was only by sheer dumb luck that Harry avoided landing on his head, snapping it.

“You’re out of your league, Potter,” taunted Downfall as a burst of blue light knocked Harry backwards again. A satisfied smirk appeared on Downfall’s face, as he heard one or more ribs cracking. “I can do everything you can do and do it better, not to mention things that you can’t do.”

Harry struggled to his feet, managing to make it back up before he was knocked back down with a banishing charm. Downfall walked over, before he hoisted Harry up magically, ripping at his hair, before he launched him down to the ground again. Harry rolled over, before he raised his arm, weakly motioning for Downfall to keep fighting. Downfall shrugged and whipped his wand, but Harry levitated a sheet of ice, causing it to absorb the impact of the large ball of fire. Harry was splashed with ice cold water in the already cold temperatures, but at least it beat getting burned to a crisp. Harry levitated a frozen tree branch and swung it towards Downfall who easily blasted it into toothpicks. With a mere flick of Downfall’s wrist, Harry was sent spiraling to the ground. Another pair of banishing charms and Harry was knocked backwards again and again. Downfall raised his hands and several bolts of fire blasted down towards Harry, but he dodged the attacks just barely, singeing his eyebrows slightly.

“Come on, Potter, time to play the hero,” said Downfall and two bolts of yellow magic shot through his hands and Harry was sent right through the Quidditch stands reducing it to toothpicks. “I’m sure you

thought you were going to challenge me and pull some implausible miracle out of your arse. Maybe drop Azkaban on my head for instance. No, Potter, the bad luck doesn't work against yourself and it comes down to skill."

Harry was pulled out of the wreckage and shot through the air like a corkscrew, before he crashed down to the ground. His arm twitched, as he pushed back to his feet, staggering, looking rather punch drunk and Downfall shot several flaming spikes. Harry swerved around and fired a slashing curse but Downfall just stood on his feet, before Downfall threw Harry right off of his feet with another intense attack. A blast of fire but Harry levitated a sheet of ice, blocking the attack, legs twitching, before he slumped to the ground and then the ice cracked and Harry was knocked down to the ground.

"Is that all you got?" taunted Harry in a weakened but Downfall blasted Harry with a large fireball that gained momentum, even in the cold air and Harry gave a pained scream, as the top half of his robes were burned completely off. He slumped to the ground, his bare chest blistered, the cold air biting his skin, as Downfall twisted his arm and Harry was knocked right off the ground. Downfall dove right on top of his adversary, wrapping his hands around Harry's throat.

"I'll strangle you with my bare hands and to think you could have taken the easy way out, when the world gets blown up," said Downfall, his grip tightening, as Harry struggled for air, gasping with all of his might. "And even if you do by some miracle defeat me, what will it accomplish? Do you really expect the uninformed masses to distinguish between what Harry Potter did and what Downfall did? They will make your life miserable, until they end it. So in reality, I'm doing you a favor. The world will use you as a scapegoat when they need someone to blame for their own incompetence. Then they will elevate you on a pedestal, only to take you down. Because if there is one thing people like more than a hero they can worship, is having a hero that crashes into oblivion. THE WORLD DESERVES TO SUFFER! THEY DON'T DESERVE ANYTHING! THEY ARE A BUNCH OF ELTIST BASTARDS WHO NITPICK EVERYTHING! THEY'RE LUCKY THAT I'VE SHOWN MERCY! They will fall, no matter if I win or lose, Harry Potter will be nothing."

Suddenly, by some sheer force of will and inner fury, Harry managed to shove Downfall's hands off of his neck, causing the crazed madman to back off and Harry to spring up and throw a blast of silver light, backing Downfall off.

"I don't fight for this world, I do this because I have no other purpose and maybe, just maybe, I'm the suicidal noble idiot that people think I am, maybe I'm just too stupid to live, but if I fall, I'm taking you straight to hell with me!" cried Harry intensely as he threw two more spells that Downfall lazily deflected before Harry shot a fireball right at Downfall who calmly put out the attempt.

"Using fire to defeat me , pathetic, given our magical power, you're fighting with a wet book of matches while I have a fucking flamethrower!" shouted Downfall loudly as he sent a large wall of fire towards Harry, who just barely managed to avoid it.

"Can your dialogue be any cornier?" asked Harry in an agitated voice.

"Well sorry if I'm not giving you Shakespearian literature level material," sniped Downfall sarcastically. "Nothing but whiny and complaining and bitching and moaning, why don't you just slice your wrists while writing dodgy poetry and get it over with? You should be posting on an Internet message board with your level of whining."

"Oh clever," said Harry dryly, as he dodged the attack but the next one knocked him off balance and another one knocked him off of his feet. Two more attacks and Harry dropped to the ground, blood dripping from his mouth but he pushed himself to a standing position and dodged as Downfall propelled himself towards Harry, but Harry dodged, before he weakly sent two more attacks, before he slumped over and Downfall smashed a magically created blunt force right into Harry. Harry collapsed to the ground. Another shot and Harry was knocked right on his back. Downfall looked down with utter contempt at the motionless, beaten, and battered Boy-Who-Lived.

"So the great hero has nothing left, barely lasting longer in the battlefield than Lucius Malfoy does in the bedroom," said Downfall before he cackled madly towards Harry's downed, beaten form. "So now it's time to relieve the world of the burden of...existing. I would

give an evil monologue summarizing why everyone sucks but me, but really, we'd be beating a dead and raped horse into the ground. Consider it your punishment for taking life and twisting it into something that it was never meant to be. And you can all fuck off. Yes you, I'm talking to you."

Downfall turned, babbling underneath his breath, in an incoherent and quite insane manner as he stepped forward to prepare to lower the final curtain on the world.

"I'm not done with you yet," rasped a weakened voice and Downfall turned around, to see Harry on his feet, just barely. He looked like he had been through hell and back dozens of times, but somehow by sheer force of will he had continued to fight on, holding his wand.

"Do you even have enough energy to take one more breath?" asked Downfall in a tired voice. "Really, this attempt to draw out the inevitable reeks of pure desperation. Who do you think you are anyway?"

"I'm Harry Potter, bitch," responded Harry as he threw all of the magic he could muster behind one curse. A black cyclone struck Downfall right in the chest and knocked him for a loop, causing him to crash into the castle wall. Harry looked around before he slumped forward and suddenly a loud round of laughter echoed throughout the castle, as Downfall rose back to his feet, brushing the dust off of his shoulder and he advanced forward, without a scratch on him.

"You gave your best shot, Potter, diseased and weak as you are, but now it's time for us to part ways," said Downfall as he raised his hand and an envelope of black magical light wrapped around Harry. He felt he was being ripped to shreds, everything stabbing into his skin and he tried to fight the assault, but Downfall refused to let up. "Time to purge the world of my weaker half before the world gets purged of itself."

A loud bang and several bright lights caught Downfall right in the eyes. The crazed wizard staggered backwards as Harry rubbed his arms. It hurt too much to do magic now, he was defeated but he had to summon his strength. Looking around the Quidditch field, Harry

spotted a discarded Beater Bat. Reaching over, Harry picked up the weapon and swung it.

A loud crack and Downfall was knocked backwards from the first shot. Harry swung with all of his might, breaking the Beater Bat right across the chest of Downfall but suddenly he felt a magical grip around his throat before he was launched backwards. Another blast of red light and Downfall kept walking forward, basically unharmed as Harry looked up with a dazed expression, the Whomping Willow was behind him and thus an idea was formed in his groggy mind.

“Come on Downfall, I’m still standing!” taunted Harry and Downfall raised his hands but Harry threw himself forward, before he used all of the strength that he could muster to spin Downfall around. With a tightened grip, Harry wrapped his arms around Downfall’s neck. Downfall attempted to throw Harry off which would not take much and thus the Boy-Who-Lived launched both of them backwards, causing them to smash right into the Whomping Willow.

A loud crack and a branch slammed across Downfall. Downfall gave a pained grunt and several more branches swung around wildly, smashing into him. Harry shifted his battered body, blocking the knot to freeze the tree, while hanging onto Downfall, in a feeble attempt to prevent his escape, as the branches of the tree pummeled them both. Harry could feel his strength fading but he realized that Downfall had been cut up badly by the swinging tree branches, slamming and cracking into him.

“Out of the...” gasped Downfall before he was whacked right in the mouth with the tree branch of the Whomping Willow, as Harry felt himself fading to black but he tightened his grip as much as he could manage in what may be his last breaths. Downfall broke the grip, causing Harry’s head to crack against the knot, freezing the tree and Downfall to roll away, blood dripping to the ground. He spat blood right in the face of the downed Harry who was completely motionless. His body appeared to have given out under the strain of fighting such a powerful adversary and Downfall dragged the destroyed form of Harry to his feet, legs dragging behind him. He saw the faces of Harry’s friends, having woken up from being stunned earlier and trying to get through but it was too little too late. “It could have been

different, you could have laid down without a fight. Now you have to be humiliated, destroyed. Remember, it could have been different, but now they have to watch me throw your battered body around.”

With those words, Harry was flung to the ground and he landed with a solid thud. Downfall stepped forward, as everyone waited with bated breath, for Harry to pull himself back up to continue the battle, but no signs of life. Downfall pulled up Harry to his feet and wrapped his hands. Red magical rings appeared around Harry’s neck.

“It’s too bad that you would not be awake to feel this Potter,” said Downfall and quite unnecessarily, Downfall pushed Harry’s head backwards. A loud crack and Harry collapsed to the ground, as Downfall looked pleased. Several distressed gasps but Downfall paid them no mind as he levitated the motionless form of Harry into the air, before he dropped him into the frozen waters of the Hogwarts lake.

Downfall turned as there was complete silence all around. The horrified gasps had stopped and everyone sat in numb shock. They were too horrified to realize what had happened. The evil malevolent force known as Downfall had triumphed over Harry Potter. The battle between the two sides had occurred and in a shocking swerve, the evil side of the Boy-Who-Lived was marching forward to the pay window, if you will.

“Well, I win, now where was I, oh yes, destroying the world by overloading the Hogwarts wards, I went through this whole tedious explanation earlier, but the short version, Hogwarts wards go boom, natural disasters happen, everyone dies,” said Downfall as he walked forward, doing the series of over complicated magical spells to begin the overload process of the wards.

Everyone looked towards the lake, several shocking screams. Harry was not emerging at the last second to pull a daring rescue. He was not pulling any daring last minute rescue, contradicting all laws of realism and logic. Harry Potter was not going to play the hero.

Still some held out hope to the very end, as Downfall’s face appeared gleeful, as he prepared to complete the final round of procedures, which would cause the chain reaction and they end of the world as

everyone knew out. Several anxious eyes averted towards the lake and several cries for help.

“HARRY!” echoed several voices but Downfall just responded with laughter. The fools holding onto their hopes of a clichéd ending to the very end but he paused, not having second thoughts but just wanting to pour even more salt in the wounds.

“So, the end is here, can’t say I’m too broken up about it, fair well and this is for each and every one of you,” responded Downfall as he raised up both of his hands, before turning and extending two middle fingers in the air to no one in particular.

Still no Harry and with another motion, Downfall activated the final step of the wards and with a flash of light, a chain of disasters erupted through every corner of the world.

Some time later, the world blew up, as Downfall’s cackles echoed throughout every corner of existence.

And that’s the end, a bit different than I had in mind but not too much. The world ending was planned from the beginning, even though Downfall was not the one pulling the trigger but it does work a bit better than the original plan.

As for Harry Potter fan fiction, I’m done for a while but I do have some other non-Potter related projects in mind. Whether or not they’re actually get on paper anytime soon, well, I’ll keep that in mind. As evidenced with how long this chapter took to get out, real life has been hectic recently.

And now a special bonus scene for those who stuck around, I actually almost considered putting this in the story just to see certain areas of the fandom have a meltdown for blatantly slapping the “fan fiction is serious business” belief that many seem to have in the face. Of course, I take a blatant shot at myself in this one, so yeah, you know. So let’s take it, a special bonus feature, starting Voldemort and Harry with a guest cameo from Klea Shae.

“Riddle, there is no way you could win!” shouted Harry in an intense voice.

“Let Lord Voldemort guess, because good always triumphs over evil or some such sugary rubbish,” taunted Voldemort.

“No, you twit, because this isn’t real, this is a fucking piece of fan fiction based on a series of books with my name in the title!” shouted Harry as he smacked his palm into his face. “It’s read by people who have too much time on their hands, by a person who has even more time on their hands than they do. I have to win, this is my section and based off of my book series.”

“Are you serious?” asked Voldemort in a skeptical voice.

“No that’s my late godfather,” responded Harry as he cackled at his own stupid clichéd joke.

“Oh please, that joke’s so old, it’s got liver spots,” commented the ghost of Klea Shae which caught the spirit a nasty glare from both wizards.

“I’ve read your books and they’re utter rubbish, however Lord Voldemort’s life would make a more compelling series of books,” said Voldemort. “Now that’s something that the people would be clamoring for.”

“Yeah, parents would really be lining up buy their children a set of books based off of the adventures of a rising psychopathic killer,” responded Harry sarcastically.

“Well at least I didn’t name my child, Albus Severus Potter,” sniped Voldemort.

“Well at least my most trusted servant didn’t get herself killed by Molly Weasley,” retorted Harry.

“That was low Potter and totally uncalled for, let’s take this outside,” responded Voldemort.



“We are outside, Riddle,” retorted Harry.

“CRUCIO!” shouted Voldemort angrily but Harry dodged and returned fire with fire.

The End.